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THE

Solemn Injunction.

A NOVEL.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

SOLEMN

INJUNCTION.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

AGNES MUSGRAVE,

AUTHOR OF CICELY OF RABY, &c.

"In a ſolitary chamber, and midnight hour,
"How many ſtrange events may ariſe."

VOL. II.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

Solemn Injunction.

CHAPTER I.

THE family of Sir Robert had been held in this ſtate of anxious expectation for about a fortnight; during which, to their infinite ſurpriſe, through the medium of Mr. Megrel, they learned, that all proceedings on the ſide of the plaintiff were ſuſpended.

Mr. Megrel had dined in Cavendiſh-ſquare, with the Baronet and his family, who

were too much engaged to ſee much company beſides himſelf; indeed few were admitted: they were ſitting talking of the news Mr. Meynel had brought, when a chaiſe drew quickly up to the door, and ſtopped. "They are come, they are come," cried Miſs Bertram, as ſhe jumped from her ſeat, and ran into the entrance hall. The porter had got the door quite open. Mr. Blackmore, as he ſtepped out of the carriage, juſtified the aſſertion ſhe had made. Henry, who had followed his ſiſter, as he looked into the carriage, enquired of Mr. Blackmore for William.

"Would to heaven (ſaid he emphatically) I could anſwer you, Mr. Bertram, as I wiſh, but he is not with me."

"Not with you, ſir! O tell me, is he well? why did you, Mr. Blackmore, deſert him?"

Mr. Blackmore anſwered not; but caſt a grave, and rather reproachful glance, on Henry;

Henry; which ſeemed to ſay, you queſtion harſhly; ſo was it underſtood by him, to whom it was addreſſed; and who, with much native politeneſs, and his uſual ſweetneſs of manners, as he again repeated his queſtion, effaced from Mr. Blackmore's memory, 'The why did you,' of the former; which his anxious ſolicitude had cauſed to eſcape.

"If diſeaſe is extended to the mind, (replied Mr. Blackmore,) Mr. March is ſick indeed: I did not deſert him, but he has, I fear, for ever, his friends."

Mr. Blackmore learning Sir Robert was in the dining parlour, went to him, followed by Mr. Bertram, Mary, and Alicia.

The countenance of Mr. Blackmore prepared his auditors for ill-tidings: he appeared harraſſed from fatigue; yet ſeemed as if he had ſtill more ſeverely ſuffered from agitation of mind: grief, vexation, and diſappointment, ſat on his features, whoſe general ex-

preſſion was that of ſerenity, mixed with that kind of knowledge, which books, not mankind, give to the mind. "The ſurprize I ſee, ſaid Mr. Blackmore, all evince, at my return without Mr. March, makes me ſuppoſe my laſt letters have not reached you, Sir Robert."

The date of the laſt received account was mentioned:

"I ſhall then have (ſaid Mr. Blackmore) much to recount: you have all to encounter much pain, and I may juſtly ſay, I ſtill more; for I was the guardian, the tutor of the miſguided youth; to my care afreſh was he committed; ah! would to heaven I had been allowed to return him ſafe to theſe friends, whoſe benefits at preſent, I fear, are forgotten by him.

"In my laſt letter that came ſafe to hand, I informed you, Sir Robert, we were within a day's journey of——

"Ayſcough

" Ayſcough and we drove at the ſame pace; ſtopped at the ſame houſes; and we had occaſionally eat together; and the day that I wrote he dined with us: the ſubject of our journey had, till that day, never been mentioned by either party; but he now introduced it, by ſaying we were ſuch a number of miles from ——— and pulling out his watch, began computing what hour we ſhould arrive there, and ſaid the gates of the convent would be ſhut; ' ſo, my Lord (for thus he always ſtiled poor William) to-night we muſt reſt ſatisfied; perhaps, indeed, I feel more impatient to behold a ſiſter than you do a parent whom you never ſaw; but, if to-morrow we find her as amiable and intereſting as when I left England for the Eaſt, ſhe will ſoon make you feel your happineſs in having ſuch a mother; ſoon you will be convinced, ſuch a woman as Lady Malieveren, is above impoſition.'

" William bowed coldly, and Ayſcough proceeded, ' her ladyſhip will, I doubt not,

return to England with us; and, I truſt, we ſhall have a more pleaſant journey than hitherto; you, Mr. Blackmore, will not then eye me with ſuſpicion, when you find my character cleared by ſuch indiſputable evidence: from you, my Lord, for whoſe ſake already I have done ſo much, and to whom I am ſo nearly allied, I ſhall then meet with the reſpect I deem my due.'

"The colonr mounted into poor William's face; it was, I ſaw, the bluſh of contempt; and, as if he dared not truſt himſelf to reply, again diſtantly bowed.

'Gladly (ſaid I) if juſtly founded, will Sill Sir Robert acknowledge the claim of this deſerving young man.'

"A ſmile of contemptuous malice ſpread over Ayſcough's countenance, which always bore, in my eyes, a caſt of deſigning villainy.

Again

" Again we ſat out, but, in about the midſt of the ſtage, our carriage broke down. Ayſcough offered one of us a ſeat in his, but could not accommodate both, as one of his attendants was rendered unable to ſit on horſeback, by reaſon of a fall; and, at the laſt poſt, it was with ſome difficulty we could procure even two chaiſes: this propoſal was, therefore, accepted, in preference to another which was made, of Ayſcough's ſtaying by us, till his ſervant, or ours, went forward to Soiſſans, and procured us a carriage.

" William inſiſted upon riding the horſe upon which James had been mounted; who was to remain by the carriage we quitted, to take care of the baggage.

" After travelling about a quarter of a mile, I was alarmed by having loſt ſight of my charge, and Ayſcough's ſervants, who, it was agreed, were to keep cloſe to the chaiſe; we were certain they had not paſſed, and ordering the driver to ſtop, heard the report

of a piſtol at ſome little diſtance behind us; we immediately ordered the poſtilion to drive back: this he refuſed to do; ſaying, that road had of late been infeſted by a ſet of deſperadoes, who gave no quarter. Ayſcough ſwore and threatened, whilſt I offered money and entreaties; but alike without effect: the fellow ſaying, if he was to be killed, he would rather ſuffer death from a gentleman than a thief; and though we might kill him, we could not oblige him to return, for had it been an hour later, all the gold we had ſhould not have tempted him to have drove us.

"Ayſcough leaped out, and cut the traces, and taking out piſtols, he mounted one horſe, and I the other, we gallopped back to where we ſuppoſed the report we heard had proceeded.

"A wood here adjoined the road, from which two ruffians ſprung, and ſeized the bridles of our horſes: we both fired, and the fellow

fellow who had attacked Ayſcough fell; but at that inſtant two others advanced, who dragged us from our horſes into the wood, where it was, from the duſk of the evening and the thickneſs of the wood, perfectly dark: after rifling our pockets, and binding us to a tree, they quitted us; and, no ſooner were they gone, than we diſtinguiſhed ſome perſon groaning, near us; gueſſing it muſt be him we ſought, I enquired who it was in ſuch diſtreſs.

"It was the ſervant of Ayſcough who ſpake; and of him, his maſter haſtily enquired after Lord Malievener.

'I know not (replied the fellow) I wiſh he may be alive; for he fought deſperately.'

"Another voice now ſpake, which I knew to be that of James, who had been left, as I before ſaid, with the broken chaiſe: of him I enquired for Mr. March, 'alas! I fear he is (ſaid the poor fellow) in as bad, or worſe

a condition than I am; and I fear I ſhall never live morning."

'How came you here (ſaid I) James? are you able to give any account concerning Mr. March.'

'The carriage (he replied) is not above half-a-mile from this ſpot; and, when I heard the report of a piſtol, I ſat out as faſt as I could run; Mr. March was then engaged with two ruffians, whilſt another had juſt dragged Caleb from his horſe; I fired, but without effect; and a piſtol was inſtantly diſcharged at me, which diſabled me from knowing any more; for, I imagine, they ſuppoſed I was dead, ſo drew me, (Caleb ſays) like a dead dog, into this wood.'

"Ayſcough began to curſe and ſtorm at his ſervant, for what, when he allowed him to tell his ſtory, appeared as if it had not been in his power to prevent.

"As ſoon as he could be prevailed upon to liſten, the man began his account, by ſaying, that

that almoſt immediately as they ſet out after the chaiſe, his horſe took fright, and refuſed to move; that he begged his lordſhip to proceed after the carriage, which he, with his accuſtomed goodneſs, would not.

" Thir unruly animal, (ſaid he) Caleb, will be throwing you; and ſhould any accident happen, I could not excuſe myſelf for quitting you.'

Indeed, (ſaid the fellow) it was rather dangerous, for the beaſt kicked and plunged, and was down upon his knees twenty times in as many yards; and thoſe French devils of horſes have no mouths: lord ſend me back to England.'

Ayſcough let fly a volley of oaths at the fellow and his remarks, who again proceeded:

' Well, your honours by this time was far before us; but the beaſt had begun to get forward; we hoped to be up with you pre-

ſently, when four thieves ſet upon us all at once; his Lordſhip fought till we were all over blood; we both fired when they firſt attacked us, and I ſaw two of the fellows fall, I dare ſay dead; but then more came out of the wood to help the others; ſo when James came there we were at it; but who could ſtand againſt ſo many; and yet, I think, had they not ſhot, my lord's horſe, he would have eſcaped, and then——'

'What then, raſcal?' interrogated his maſter.

'I ſaw him fall; and—'

'And, what!' ſaid I, ſcarce able to reſpire.'

'And then, ſir, he died; for I ſaw them take him up.'

'And how did you eſcape?'

'Only a little wounded, ſir; and ſo fearing, I ſuppoſe, I would alarm the country, they tied me to a tree.'

"Ayſcough wept, and ſwore, by fits; now bewailing his own, now his nephew's fate;

then the cruel diſappointment his ſiſter would ſuſtain; then he railed at Sir Robert and Lady Bertram; then his own ſervant—the poſtilion—the horſes—every thing that was connected with his preſent ſituation: and, I really ſuppoſed, ſo violent and loud were his exclamations, he had loſt his ſenſes; and I alſo feared, if the wretches were yet within hearing, they would return, and him finally diſpatch, as his voice might alarm any paſſenger on the road; thus, in my endeavours to moderate Ayſcough, I ſeemed to have forgot all beſide.

"At length he grew a little more calm; and I aſked James if he thought he could crawl to where we were bound, and endeavour to unloſe us; this he attempted; but it was ſome time ere he reached the ſpot; as he was, from pain and weakneſs, obliged to make many ſtops; he with much difficulty roſe, but almoſt ſunk at my feet, in a ſwoon, where he lay, as I ſuppoſed, dead.

"To

" To the anguiſh of mind I endured, was alſo added the ſufferings of body; for, fixed to the tree, and unable to move, I felt equal pain from the cold of the froſty night, to which I was expoſed; and the tight cordage with which I was bound.

" Thus paſſed the moſt hard night I ever endured: morning however faintly dawned, and ſhewed me James alive; but in a ſtate which declared he would not long be ſo: impatiently I wiſhed for liberty: poor William might alſo breathe; at this time we heard the ſound of horſes feet from the road; and ſoon one of the horſemen was ſeen in the wood, who unlooſened us; and at the ſame time informed us, the poſtilion, whom we left with the broken carriage, had, upon hearing the noiſe of fire arms, rode to the neareſt village for aſſiſtance, but that all were ſo afraid of the deſperadoes who infeſted the road, that nobody would venture till near day-break, to our relief.

" The

"The road was ſearched for the body of William, but without ſucceſs: it was ſuggeſted he might not have been ſo ſeverely wonnded as Ayſcough's ſervant had repreſented, and that he might have eſcaped; for had he been killed, or wounded deſperately, ſtill the foot would have remained; this hope was checked by the recollection, that two of the ruffians, Caleb had ſaid, were either killed, or wounded; and him, who Ayſcough had fired, alſo fell; none of thoſe were now to be ſeen, but the graſs was ſtained with blood, in man places; although the horſe, which had been ſhot under William was found in a deep ditch, ſecure from a ſlight obſervation; it was therefore ſuppoſed, the dead and wounded had been removed, and Ayſcough agreed with me, in thinking, we had beſt proceed to Soiſſons, and procure aſſiſtance from the police of the city.

"The wounds of James were bound up, and Ayſcough and I ſet out, leaving James, with Caleb, who was only ſlightly wounded; but

but much bruiſed, he ſaid, to the charge of the people who releaſed us; 'I fear (ſaid Mr. Blackmore) you will think me tedious, in reciting ſo minutely, every ſeemingly trifling particular; but it is neceſſary you ſhould be exactly informed, that you may have it, Sir Robert, in your power to judge of every thing; as every little minutiæ tends to ſtrengthen, or weaken, the conjectures I have made; perhaps I have made them raſhly."

"But, pray, my dear ſir, do only ſay what has become of poor William?" ſaid Mr. Bertram.

"I can (replied Mr. Blackmore) only relate what I know; and when I finiſh my tale, Sir Robert, I dare to ſay, Sir Robert will be better enabled to gueſs at the cauſe of this ſtrange affair, than was I now to tell you the concluſion of my adventures in France."

The baronet and his lady fully agreed with Mr. Blackmore, and begged he might proceed, without attending to the queſtion of Mary.

"On

"On two of the horſes, (continued Mr. Blackmore) Ayſcough and I reached Soiſſons, from whence I ſent a ſurgeon, with a carriage for James; and making application, through the medium of the gentlemen on whom we had letters of credit, I procured a party of chaſſeurs, with whom I was about to ſet out, when I was met by Ayſcough, who ſaid, he had been to viſit his ſiſter, on his return from whom, he learned what I had done; 'in this, (ſaid he) Mr. Blackmore, we are equally concerned; you for your late pupil, I for my nephew; our honours too are equally at ſtake; therefore, the ſureſt way to find out the wretches who have, I fear, murdered him, is, for us to take different routes; you may go towards Boulogne, ſearching the country as you paſs along, whilſt I will take the road to Dieppe.'

'You will excuſe me, ſaid I, Mr. Ayſcough, in ſaying I conſent not to your propoſal; wherever you go, I ſhall accompany you: our honour is equally, as you obſerve, at ſtake, in this affair; therefore, we ſtand mutually

mutually anſwerable for each other's conduct, if together—which, if ſeparated, we cannot.'

"Ayſcough made ſeveral attempts to alter my reſolution, but, finding all was in vain, ſubmitted; ſaying, 'this was no time for altercation, and that the only way to learn what was become of the object of our ſearch, was to heartily join our endeavours.'

"The country round Soiſſons was ſearched, partly by the people we went with, but in other directions by another party, under the direction of Mr. Gregory, the Engliſh merchant.

"After we had travelled a conſiderable way towards Dieppe, whether Ayſcough had propoſed to go, without hearing any account of the wretches I ſought, I ſaw ſomething glittering upon the road; without mentioning my deſign, I diſmounted, and ſaw it was a ſeal, which I well knew belonged to Mr March; I put it into my pocket, and perceived

ceived the mark of horſes feet here ſtriking from the highway acroſs ſome unincloſed ground: without conſulting Ayſcough, or giving any reaſon for my doing ſo, I put myſelf at the head of the party, and ſet off full ſpeed; nor ſlackened my pace till I eſpied a cottage, or rather hovel, by the way; enquiring there, I learned, that about daybreak, ſeveral people on horſeback had been obſerved to paſs, as if guarding one of the party, whoſe horſe was led by another perſon.

" Still hoping, though without communicating my idea to any one, we again ſet out, following the track the party were ſaid to have taken; and which brought us to the ſea coaſt the next day, by roads not fit for carriages. Ayſcough had long before, and with much reaſon, complained of fatigue; as we had ſcarce ſtopped to eat, much leſs ſleep; and had not the promiſed reward prevented deſertion, I ſuppoſe I ſhould have long been

been abandoned by the people I brought from ——.

"I had generally contrived to keep Ayſcough ignorant of a part of the information which from time to time I procured: it was, indeed, ſo trifling, that it would ſcarce have kept hope alive, had this not been the road he at firſt propoſed going himſelf alone; and had I not perceived, ſpite of the eagerneſs he appeared to diſplay to proceed, an evident diſinclination to do ſo; perhaps even this had not been remarked by me, had not my ſuſpicions been previouſly rouſed, firſt, by overhearing Ayſcough, who pretended not to underſtand French, talking to one of the poſtilions in that language; and though I was not ſufficiently near to preciſely ſay the ſubject, yet, by what I could gather, I thought the fellow, who was the one that overturned us, was making a demand upon him for money; the ſecond reaſon I had for ſuſpicion, was, that whilſt my hands, from the

the tightneſs of the cords which bound me to the tree, and the cold of the night, ſwelled to a degree which rendered them not only painful, but really benumbed to a degree which rendered application of ſome kind neceſſary to be made; his, although he complained much more than I did, appeared to have no marks of violence upon them; his ſervant, alſo, if at all wounded, muſt have been very ſlightly ſo, and appeared in the morning more like a perſon in a ſtate of intoxication, than one who had ſuffered as he pretended

"When, therefore, we reached the ſea-coaſt, not far from Diepe, and no tidings could be learned of theſe we ſought, Ayſcough propoſed returning by another road, ſearching the country as we went: To this, I replied, I did not yet mean to return to ——— but ſhould remain where I was.

'To what end:' ſaid Ayſcough, with an air of aſtoniſhment.

'For

'For the expreſs end, Mr. Ayſcough, I undertook the voyage from England; for the expreſs end I have travelled from Soiſſon to this ſpot.'

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

"THE day was ſtormy, and the ſea ran mountains high; and in the offing lay a veſſel which appeared in imminent danger.

"The hut belonging to ſome fiſhermen appeared on the ſea banks, near where we were; thither I went, and enquired of them 'Why that ſhip lay there, expoſed to ſuch peril?' one of the people belonging to this cottage informed me, that ſhip had laid there for ſome days, which, if ſhe perſiſted in doing, he could not ride out the ſtorm, as the anchorage

chorage was very bad, and ſhe was a large veſſel: a boat, he ſaid, had twice attempted to come from it to land that day, but had been obliged to deſiſt from ſo hazardous an enterprize.

"The evident anxiety of Ayſcough, though he endeavoured to conceal it, made me reſolve to watch equally him and the veſſel; for I felt a ſtrange preſentiment that ſome connexion ſubſiſted between him and it; yet, by no means, could I ſay how.

"We took, with the leave of their inhabitants, our abode in ſome of the fiſhermen's boats; I did not endeavour at ſleep, nor, I am perſuaded, did Ayſcough, though he pretended to do ſo, with a deſign, I ſuppoſe, to put me off my guard.

"The wind abated during the night, and at day-break a boat was ſeen putting off from the ſhip; I rouſed the people, who had accompanied us from Soiſſons, and armed, took

my

my way, at their head, towards the ſea; concealing ourſelves behind ſome rocks, from, as if beneath which, we ſaw three men advance, guarding a fourth; as I beheld that fourth, I inſtantly recognized William; and fired at one of his guards, who, wounded, was unable to accompany the others, as they fled towards the boat, which had, at that inſtant, reached the ſhore; into this they leaped, and it inſtantly rowed back to the ſhip.

"Ayſcough wept, embraced William, thanked heaven that had preſerved him, and me, who was the chief inſtrument—The cords unbound, by which the late priſoner had been ſecured, he accompanied us back to the fiſhermen's hut.

'Have you, (I enquired) any clue, Mr. March, that may aſſiſt in developing this ſtrange adventure.'

'I have, (he replied) caſting a look of infinite diſdain on Ayſcough; who ſaid,

'Let us then learn, my lord, on what your ſuſpicions are founded?'

'I will give the hiſtory of my adventure; you and Mr. Blackmore, then, may make your comments as you chuſe.'

"William then related what I have already: as his account nearly tallied with what I had before been told by Ayſcough's ſervant and James; except that, he ſaid, the wound he received was a trifling one, only on his arm; but which, after his horſe was ſhot, made his further reſiſtance madneſs: that they had dragged him from the road, and tied a handkerchief over his mouth, and bound his hands: he then was ſet upon a horſe, to which he was faſtened; after which, they ſet out and travelled without ſtopping, except to change horſes that waited for them on the road, till near day-break; 'when, (continued Mr. March) my hands were unbound, and they made me partake of the victuals which was ready for them, in a miſerable looking hut, a little diſtance from the road. There,

I heard, that as day dawned, we were to quit the highway, and ſtrike into bye-roads; ſuppoſing you would ſoon diſcover I was not behind the chaiſe, and conſequently when you found me not, ſearch the country round Soiſſon.'

'I pulled from my watch, a ſeal, well-known to Mr. Blackmore, which I concealed in my mouth; this I let drop at the time we quitted the highway, as, if by chance found, I thought it would, at leaſt, invigorate the purſuit after me: we reached the ſea ſhore, where, I underſtood, a veſſel waited to convey me ſomewhere: faithful to their truſt, bribes and threats were equally loſt upon my guards; both, I again tried during the day and night which I was conſtrained to lay concealed, in a cavern, till the minute I was ſo providentially relieved.'

'From this ſtory (ſaid Aſcough) it appears to me, that theſe villains have had ſome employer of conſequence; whoſe name, though I may conjecture at, I ſhall not at preſent mention.'

'The wounded perſon, (ſaid I) might perhaps throw ſome light on this dark affair.'

'Perhaps not (rejoined Ayſcough) Lord Malieveren has already ſaid, threats and promiſes were alike loſt upon them.'

"I ordered the man to be brought into the cottage, who, upon my deſiring he would inform us what had moved him to engage ſo villainous and hazardous an enterprize, he anſwered, he was a native of Picardy, and had merely been engaged as a guide by the others; that he had expreſſed his ſorrow for the young gentleman, and wiſhed his comrades to allow his eſcape; but, that they threatened his life, ſhould he aſſiſt him.

"I enquired if the others were alſo Frenchmen? he anſwered me, ſaying, they were not, but Engliſh, though they ſpoke the language of the country with fluency; that a baron of England had employed them to take away that young man, who pretended he was heir to the baron's lands; though he had brought him up out of charity.

" Ayſcough, pretending ſtill he could not ſpeak the language, though he now affected to, in part, underſtand, begged I would enquire, if he had heard the villains mention the name of their employer.

" The fellow ſaid, he often had heard the name, as they talked in Engliſh to each other; it was Bertram, Sir Robert Bertram.

' Where, now, Mr. Blackmore (ſaid Ayſcough, with a cool inſtance of manner) pray ſir, where now is the ſuſpicion ultimately to reſt?'

' There has, ſir, (I replied with all the calmneſs I could aſſume) a ſtrange effort been made—.'

' For what? (he haſtily interrupted.)'

' To remove, Mr. Ayſcough, the ſuſpicion—'

" I wiſhed not to have, at this place, any further altercation; and, fearing alſo, it would not be in my power to prevent Mr. March from breaking out in invectives

againſt the ſlanderer of his kind patron; I gave orders for ſecuring the wounded man; after which we ſet out again for Soiſſons, where we were to behold the ſiſter of Ayſcough: this journey took us more thon double the time we had ſo recently travelled it in.

"When we reached Soiſſons, Ayſcough cauſed the fellow, who had been wounded, to make a formal depoſition of the whole affair, as far as he was connected; of this, Ayſcough had one copy, I the other.

'We will now, Mr. Blackmore (ſaid Ayſcough) if you pleaſe, accompany his Lordſhip to viſit Lady Malieveren.'

"To this propoſal, I agreed; and at a neat houſe, ſeemingly fitted up with ſome degree of elegance, in the ſuburbs, we were, by Ayſcough, introduced to a woman, under forty, whoſe features were uncommonly fine, and who had, indeed, a moſt prepoſſeſſing coun-

countenance; ſhe acted, for I am moſt thoroughly perſuaded, it was but aſſumed, the part ſhe had to perform, moſt wonderfully; the emotion ſhe appeared to ſuſtain on the ſight of a child, ſo providentially reſtored, was admirable; though aware I was giving way to deception, ſo artfully did ſhe counterfeit the feelings of nature, that I momentarily yielded to the illuſion, and wept, ſo did William: a little, as it were, recovered from this firſt effuſion of tenderneſs, the pretended Baroneſs lightly touched on the wrongs ſhe had ſuſtained from her Lord's relation; but this was done with ſuch mildneſs, ſuch an infinitude of artifice, that ſhe ſeemed rather ſoliciting pity for her own youth and inexperience, that had cauſed ſuch trouble to her child, than as if ſhe meant to teach him ingratitude to his kind benefactor; then ſhe thanked heaven, that had reſtored him to her, ſo amiable. ſo accompliſhed.

" To ſeparate William from this artful and faſcinating woman, I begged the ſervant, Ayſcough had mentioned as living with his ſiſter, might be called.

" The woman appeared; ſhe was evidently older than her miſtreſs: what was art in the one, ſeemed effrontery and boldneſs in the other, to a degree, which made her, in my opinion, fit to claſs with the moſt worthleſs and wretched of her ſex. She confirmed all that Ayſcough thought proper at that time to have ſubſtantiated; but as I farther interrogated, ſhe ſaid, then ſhe would only anſwer ſuch queſtions as ſhe thought proper; that at preſent ſhe was no ways obliged to ſubmit to my interrogatories; that her miſtreſs had too long patiently borne the oppreſſion of the haughty ſiſter of her lord; but, that for her part, ſhe was endowed with very little; and it was beſt not to provoke her; that I might have patience till the trial, when I ſhould hear all ſhe knew regarding the

the whole affair; and it would be more than Sir Robert could confront, or than I would wiſh to liſten to.—But more of the woman hereafter.

"I propoſed we ſhould quit Soiſſons on the next day but one; this, after much heſitation, was agreed to by her pretended ladyſhip; 'but then (ſaid ſhe) Mr. Blackmore, in return for my obliging you, I hope you will be ſo kind as go round by Cambray, where I have an intimate friend, who preſides over the convent of Benedictine Dames.'

"To this I objected.

'Nay, (ſhe ſaid) if this is the caſe, I ſhall not incommode myſelf, by quitting Soiſſons at the time you have preſcribed; I ſhould wiſh to diſpoſe of my furniture in this place.

'I have no friend to act for me, as my reſidence here has been very ſhort: ſince the death of my lord, I have been a boarder in a convent, principally, indeed, at Cambray, where I was chiefly educated; was I there-

fore to conſult either prudence or convenience, I ought not to quit Soiſſons for at leaſt a fortnight.'

"Finding, upon recollection, that by going to Cambray, we ſhould lengthen our journey very inconſiderably, I agreed to her terms, as ſhe intended to ſet out the ſecond day.

"Returning to our hotel, I found William almoſt wavering in his belief; ſo deeply had his feelings been intereſted; ſo artfully had the appeal been made to them; that he had need to recall, as he talked to me, the continued ſeries of obligations which had been conferred on him, by Sir Robert Bertram and Lady Bertram, to efface the impreſſion he had received; ſo amiable appeared the perſon to whom he had been introduced; ſo ſolicitous did ſhe ſeem for his welfare.

'Sure (ſaid he) the agitation ſhe diſplayed was real; it communicated itſelf to me and you

you, even you, Mr. Blackmore, were affected by it.'

"I denied not the charge; 'but Mr. March, ſaid I, even then was I ſenſible I yielded to an illuſion, and feel now aſhamed of my weakneſs—aſhamed that thus an artful woman ſhould triumph over my ſenſe of rectitude; and at an age too which ought better to have fortified my mind.'

'But, my dear ſir, (ſaid this candid, and as then I thought him, ingenuous youth,) might not this lady herſelf be deceived; may not Ayſcough have impoſed on her this tale; ſhe looks ſo unaffected, ſo undeſigning.'

'This, ſaid I, William, proves but the excellence of her art; ſhe deceives you by hiding her artifice.'

"Such was a part of our converſation, which I relate, to ſhew what influence this firſt interview had upon the unfortunate young man.

"The lady would ſcarce ſuffer herſelf to be ſeparated from her newly recovered ſon; for ſo ſhe termed poor William, and inſiſted and entreated by turns, he ſhould travel in the ſame carriage ſhe did; but aware of her arts, I was peremptory in my refuſal; and we quitted Soiſſons at the time I had appointed, ſhe and her brother in one chaiſe, and the ſervants in another.

"James, unwilling, poor fellow, to be left behind, though in no fit condition to travel, occupied the third vehicle.

"Without any thing worth relating having occurred, we reached Cambray, by which route I had agreed to travel, as alſo to reſt a day, that the pretended baroneſs ſhould viſit the holy mother of the Benedictines, in which convent, ſhe ſaid, ſhe had ſome time reſided. — This, indeed, upon enquiry, I found ſtrictly true; but that, then ſhe had borne the name of Boſvylle.

One

" One day was ſpent by us in viewing Cambray and its environs. The next morning Ayſcough informed us his ſiſter was ſeized with a violent cold and ſore throat; which made it highly improper ſhe ſhould proceed, which, however, ſhe had determined upon doing, leſt I ſhould upbraid her with breach of promiſe; but this he hoped I would not inſiſt upon; and that it was perfectly unknown to his ſiſter, the requeſt he made of our ſtaying another day. In this requeſt William joined, nor did I think of refuſing.

" The more we had ſeen of this woman, the more engaging ſhe appeared; there was at once dignity and good humour, blended with a large ſhare of ſenſibility in her countenance; her figure was commanding, her voice clear and well modulated, perfectly fitted indeed for the tone of tenderneſs ſhe choſe to aſſume.

" When ſpeaking to William, and as ſhe converſed when we met at the inns upon various

various ſubjects, her underſtanding appeared clear and comprehenſive.

"Softened by her manner, which was all that the tendereſt parent could, in ſuch a ſituation, have diſplayed; my charge was thrown off his guard, and, forgetting the caution which was neceſſary, indulged himſelf in vain reveries of happineſs; even I had need of all my circumſpection, to ward off her artful, inſinuating manner.

"She tried, at firſt, flattery, in various forms; and talked often of obligations on her ſon's account; this, with that keenneſs of diſcernment, ſhe poſſeſſed, ſhe ſaw diſguſted me; then of my integrity to Sir Robert Bertram: 'ſhe hoped not (ſhe ſaid) to eraſe the very unfavourable ſentiments I had imbibed againſt her;' this ſhe alſo found not to anſwer; for I warmly avered the well-known liberality of the Bertrams.

"Next, with much ſeeming ſincerity, ſhe aſſailed

aſſailed me upon another ſcore, in tones, and with a manner, that my heart involuntarily exclaimed, as William had done, 'ſhe is herſelf deceived! that I would ſo far reſpect her maternal feelings, as to avoid infuſing into the heart of her amiable ſon, thoſe prejudices which governed me regarding her.'

'Reſpect! (ſaid ſhe emphatically) Mr. Blackmore; it is a mother long ſeparated from her child, who thus entreats; alas! that child has ſo long been eſtranged from the arms of his only parent, it is not poſſible he can at firſt feel the ſame attachment ſhe does to him.'

"I pauſed ere I returned an anſwer; then recalling my ideas from the intereſting and ſupplicating figure before me, I anſwered, 'that as yet I had infuſed no principle into the mind of my late pupil, but ſuch as were ſtrictly conformable, I hoped, to every religious and moral duty; and I doubted not William's fulfilling, where due, every relative obligation; how far, madam, on that ſcore

ſcore, you are entitled, the law, I ſuppoſe, will ſhortly determine.'

" Never (ſo judiciouſly did ſhe manage) once did ſhe directly arraign the family to whom William owed ſo vaſt an obligation; and whom, according to Ayſcough, had equally deprived herſelf and child of their right.

" To viſit the ſick lady, I returned with William to the Benedictine Convent; we were ſhewn into a chamber, where the mock Baroneſs was ſeated, and with her a beautiful young woman, to whom we were introduced; but ſhe ſoon quitting us, we were informed by Ayſcough's ſiſter, ' that the young novice' who had left the room, was Mademoiſelle Durand, daughter to the Count de Marigny; who, compelled by her friends to aſſume the veil, was to take the vow in a few days; it will be an intereſting ſpectacle (ſaid ſhe) ſo young, ſo lovely, thus for life to be immured. I have long known her, for ſhe was educated in this convent.

' We

'We were diſcourſing on the ſubject of her being propoſed as you entered; ſhe declared, as a menial ſervant ſhe could be happy, was ſhe but not deprived of liberty; 'willingly, (ſaid the lovely girl) would I ſacrifice myſelf to my father's family pride, but not in this way, Lady Malieveren.'

"She then propoſed eſcaping from the convent, and accompanying me to England, where ſhe hoped to find ſubſiſtence: ſo juſt and affecting indeed were the arguments ſhe urged, I perhaps might have ſuffered myſelf to have been prevailed upon, had it not been for the odium ſuch a thing would throw upon the ſuperior of this holy community, whoſe unvaried kindneſs to me merits a far different return.

"All joined in deploring the hard fate of Mademoiſelle Durand, which formed our chief converſation whilſt we ſtayed at the convent; quitting it, the pretended Lady Malieveren thanked me for my attention to her

her eaſe, ſaid, ‘ ſhe hoped to be able to travel the next day.’

“ When we returned to the hotel at which we were, William again talked of the beautiful novice, and enquired of me ‘ if I thought it might not be poſſible to effect her eſcape.’

‘ It befits us not, (I replied) Mr. March, as ſtrangers in this country, thus openly to violate its laws; and were we to engage in defence of all thoſe, who like this young lady, are ſacrificed to an idea of aggrandiſing the heirs of families, more noble than wealthy, we ſhould engage in a herculean taſk; to you, to me alſo, it appears hard, a father, like the Count de Marigny, ſhould be authoriſed by laws deviſed by ſuperſtition, thus to deprive a daughter of her liberty, and tie her down to perform a certain ſet of mechanical devotions, which, if not flowing from the heart, loſe all merit: thus we judge, but born and educated in a country where thoſe prejudices were linked with the religion you

you were taught, and authoriſed by cuſtom, you would behold ſuch ſacrifices with indifference, when no longer an unuſual circumſtance.'

'No, Mr. Blackmore, (he replied) had I been born and educated in the moſt ſuperſtitious country in Europe, ſtill I ſhould think as I do; ſtill, Mr. Blackmore, my ſoul would revolt againſt oppreſſion, notwithſtanding it was diſguiſed by names and forms, I might eſteem ſacred: nature revolts at the blooming ſacrifice; reaſon loudly proclaims, that by deſerting the ſtation aſſigned us, we ſin againſt the author of our being; that it is cowardice which tempts us to take ſhelter from temptation in a conventual life, where loſt to ſociety, our talents are hidden, our virtues, except patience, uſeleſs.'

"This was nearly the converſation we held on this ſubject; and the following morning we preſented ourſelves at the gate of the convent, where we learned, that Lady Malieveren, for ſo was ſhe ſtiled, was in a high fever,

ſever, and utterly unable, as we expected, to accompany us; we proceeded to the parlour, where the ſuperior informed us, that her gueſt was deemed by the phyſician to be in hazard, from not having taken early care of a diſorder ſhe had conſidered as trifling.

"William expreſſed a wiſh to ſee his ſuppoſed mother; and I attended him to her chamber, where we found again the fair novice, who again withdrew; but William's eyes followed her as ſhe retreated:

"We found our late fellow-traveller ſo unable to proceed, that, on quitting the convent, I propoſed we ſhould ſet out without her, as we had no reaſon to ſuppoſe our doing ſo could injure the intereſt of Sir Robert.

'You muſt excuſe me (replied William) Mr. Blackmore, when I ſay, I am reſolved not to quit Cambray at preſent.'

'Reflect (ſaid I) upon the artifice of thoſe people; ſure you have forgot your late adventure in the road to Soiſſons, on the ſubtle

ſubtle invention made uſe of to throw (when they found their purpoſe failed) the odium of the whole tranſaction upon your beſt and only friends; reflect but for a moment on the complicated villainy of this.'

'All this I am fully ſenſible of, ſir, (he replied) I ſee that my ruin is to be the price by which the happineſs of my benefactor is to be diſturbed; they wiſh me to wound him by ingratitude—they wiſh to poiſon my mind by falſe tales, by incredible ſuggeſtions; but ſuffer me, Mr. Blackmore, to believe, I am not alone impoſed upon; deſtroy not the illuſion—ſuffer me to at leaſt imagine I have a mother, and that it is my duty, to that mother, to alleviate her ſufferings, not to add to them, by unkindly deſerting her.'

'Mr. March, I ſaid, (with at once ſurpriſe and reproof in my tone of voice) do I hear aright? are you, then, ſo credulouſly weak? this woman! do you then believe her your mother? do you believe her, then, the widow of Lord Malieveren? do you credit the

the abſurd tale againſt a family whoſe actions ſpeak for them, whoſe general benevolence bleſſes all within its influence? is it William March whom I have liſtened to?'

'Oh! Mr. March, (exclaimed the ſtrongly agitated youth, as he ſeized my hand) I ſee you are diſpleaſed with me; oh! I ſhall loſe all my friends; already I am miſerable—already I augur ill from this journey; who can judge of my feelings! ſituated ſo ſtrangely: you will deſpiſe me—already you call me weak;—how then ſhall I venture to diſcloſe to you, a part of the varied emotion which ſo powerfully agitates me?'

"I bade him freely confide in me; that I pitied whilſt I blamed, and thought the only way to extricate him from the arts of this woman, was to fly from her.'

'Thinking as I do, flight is out of the queſtion: oh, Mr. Blackmore, had you been told you were the offſpring of creatures the baſeſt

baſeſt, the very dregs of ſociety; unwilling, as I was, to trace to its ſource, a ſpring ſo defiled—had you met, as I did, with a woman, who appeared all that was amiable, and who poſſeſſed various pleaſing talents, who was proud in calling an outcaſt, deſerted and ſuppoſed meanly born young man, her ſon, would not in your breaſt every feeling of affection, of ſenſibility, been awakened by ſuch an incident; would not you, Mr. Blackmore, with all your ſelf-command, have forgot, in the enthuſiaſm of the moment, probabilities? O, yes, you would, like me, have yielded to the pleaſing illuſion; you would have then, like me, have built ten thouſand airy caſtles, all to reconcile, as I have, gratitude, with the fond hope of rendering this idea a reality: would to heaven it was: oft, oft has my birth covered me with ſhame.'

" I argued with him on this laſt falſe conconſtruction, telling him, that evil qualities or good ones were not handed down to poſterity

terity by the blood; that although his parents were, almoſt beyond a doubt, moſt deſpicable, yet his good qualities had put him on a footing with the ſon of one of the firſt gentlemen; and that it is a ſpecies of pride I thought his mind had been elevated far above."

'For myſelf, (ſaid he, with an energy of manner) 'I heed it not, but as it croſſes my deareſt hopes!—Oh, no! what did I ſay? —alas! I dare not hope that my love would be ſanctioned;—yet was I the ſon of Lord Malieveren:—but I talk idly, it is not ſo—it is impoſſible; then I ſhould not have been abandoned. O! Mr. Blackmore, you are ignorant of the agony I have undergone, loving, and I have dared to ſuppoſe, beloved: yet, how can I ever hope the offſpring of ſuch wretches can even be ſanctioned by parental authority; nor am I ſo abandoned, as to wiſh to drag beauty, rank, and innocence, down to my own level; but if the ſon of ——: no, I will not ſuppoſe—

but

but ſo pleaſing, ſo flattering an illuſion—ſo every way gratifying, I want ſtrength of mind to diſmiſs it; and, I fear, alas, greatly I fear, being driven by it to ſome deſparate, ſome raſh deed, when I ſhall ſink beneath the pity I now confine you to beſtow..'

"Such was, as well as I am able to recollect, the ſtrange, myſterious, and incoherent anſwer, Mr. March gave me.

"Twice that day he viſited the convent; and in the evening I informed him, that, if in conformity to his wiſhes, I remained at Cambray, he was ſo far to comply with mine, as not to go out alone; to this he agreed, and we viſited together, the following day, the convent—when we were told Lady Malieveren was too ill to receive us, however, on the next we were allowed to ſee her; and found that Mademoiſelle Durand had, on the preceding one, taken the veil.

"William was viſibly affected by this intelligence; and I had reaſon to ſuppoſe he paid a ſecond viſit at the convent.

"An entire week paſſed away, when the ſick lady declaring ſhe was able to travel by ſhort ſtages, it was agreed we ſhould ſet out early the next morning.

CHAPTER III.

"AT the time ſettled for our departure, I had breakfaſted, but William had not made his appearance; I went to his chamber and found him not; nor from the people of the houſe could I gain any intelligence concerning him; no one had ſeen him that morning: again I went into his chamber, flattering myſelf with the ſtrange idea that there I ſhould find him; on the table lay a letter, which I haſtily opened, but at that inſtant his ſuppoſed mother entered the room, and inſtantly fainted; Ayſcough followed, and bade me haſte inſtantly to quit

Cambray, as Mademoiſelle Durand had eſcaped from the convent, where ſhe ſo lately had taken the vow, with Lord Malieveren; and that they were ſeen on the road to Calais, and doubted not they were gone to England; the power of the Count de Morigny, equally with that of the Religieuſe, would be employed, he added, to detain us as accomplices in this daring inſult. I declared I would not move till I heard ſome more certain account of my charge.

"The maſter of the houſe now, with a terrified air, came to confirm the report, and to ſay alſo that the officers of juſtice were at the houſe: the carriages waited at a back gate; and Lady Malieveren recovering, fled; whilſt Ayſcough ſeized me by the arm, ſaying, I ſhould not thus devote myſelf to deſtruction; at the ſame inſtant James entered, telling us, thoſe who ſought to detain us were actually in the houſe, and opened the window, ſaying, no other avenue of eſcape was left: by this way we were quickly in the carriages that waited

waited for us, which ſet off at full ſpeed. I now unfolded the letter I had taken from the table in William's room, in which he pleaded pity operating with love, and recalled to my mind, the converſation he had held with me, when he ſaid, he feared his committing ſome deſperate and raſh action; but the knowledge which I would gain, muſt perfectly elucidate the whole of what he that day had ſaid regarding the agonies he had undergone, and the deſpair he felt; and begged me to palliate his crime to Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, whoſe kindneſs he could never ceaſe to remember, although the decided ſtep he had taken, for ever baniſhed him their preſence, and the ſociety of his friends.

"At Calais, we learned, two people that anſwered the account we gave of William and the fair Nun, had embarked in an open boat, it was ſuppoſed for England.

"At Calais we alſo ſaw their perſons deſcribed, and large rewards offered for apprehending them.

"To linger in France was now uſeleſs; and with Ayſcough and his ſiſter I ſailed by the firſt packet to Dover.

"Ayſcough declared, the ſtep his nephew had taken would make him for ever renounce him; whilſt his ſiſter ſaid, as ſhe wept, that could ſhe but behold him, the mother would plead moſt powerfully in her heart; but that, if her brother gave up his cauſe, ſhe had no chance, ſo limitted were her means of contending with Sir Robert Bertram, for the eſtates of Malieveren.

"We both took, in different carriages, the London road; but after we reached the Obeliſk in St. George's Fields, I never ſaw their carriage."

Mr.

Mr. Blackmore's ſtory finiſhed, and Sir Robert having aſſured him of his entire approbation, all joined in expreſſing their ſorrow for Mr. March, who had thus fallen into the ſnare prepared for him.

No one in the party but was ſatisfied, that the artful woman, who aſſumed the title of Lady Malieveren, had feigned the ſickneſs which detained them at Cambray, till ſhe had wrought upon the ſenſibility of poor William, in a way deemed moſt likely to prove his ruin.

"The miſguided, unfortunate, young man (ſaid Sir Robert) has, by this fatal ſtep, thrown of all reſtraint; and, I fear, when he looks back, the diſtance between the path he has raſhly taken, and that he has quitted, will appear too great for him ever to regain it; and that, loſt in deſpair, he will madly ruſh on in his career."

"No, Sir Robert, allow me (ſaid Henry) to vindicate my friend; allow me to ſay, I

know the heart of William March can never be intentionally wicked; with my life I dare anſwer for his integrity being proved hereafter: oh! that I knew where to find him! ſoon ſhould he, at your feet, confeſs, with the noble frankneſs of his nature, he had erred—he had been deceived; but truſt me, never deliberately guilty. Oh, no! William March, the friend of my inmoſt ſoul! no, he muſt have been artfully betrayed:—yes, you will find he has:—but I truſt he will not fall the victim of thoſe arts which at preſent envelope him."

Sir Robert and Lady Bertram agreed with their ſon, that William had been artfully beſet; yet, aware that Ayſcough was a raſcal, who ſought but to raiſe claims to perplex, he ought to have been more upon his guard; and that it betrayed a degree of ingratitude they had not deemed his heart capable of, even to liſten to the tale told by the woman, who pretended to be his mother.

"Ah

" Ah! my dear Sir Robert, and you, my mother, (ſaid Henry) marked you not in Mr. Blackmore's recital, the ſtruggle—the violent agitation, this virtuous but moſt unhappy young man underwent; his reaſon, his judgment, his deep ſenſe of gratitude, all revolted againſt the ſuſpicions ſo inſidiouſly infuſed.—Oh, think, ſo ſituated, who would not, as he did, have liſtened to the pleaſing deception, even though he was conſcious it was one."

" Henry, (ſaid Sir Robert) you prove ſo ſtrenuous an advocate for your friend, that it behoves me to offer ſomething in vindication of my own character, which, as yet, is unſullied, and which I fondly hoped to have left ſo to my children."

" Alas! ſir, have I uttered, in my zeal to vindicate my friend, any improper warmth! elſe, why this from you—?'

" I only wiſh, Henry, to recall your attention to the whole of this intricate affair:

Providence, when it ſees fit, will unveil the dark aſſaſſin of my peace. That ſuch a lurking villain exiſts, I ſcarce doubt; and that Ayſcough is but a tool in the hand of a more accompliſhed raſcal than himſelf; but on this I am ſilent, for reaſons known to myſelf—moſt powerful ones: thus, I am accuſed of depriving an innocent child, ere it ſaw the light, of eſtates rightly its due; and that this child I have brought up a poor dependant on my capricious bounty; if this is proved, what have you to inherit, Henry, but infamy?"

"Ah! my father, is it poſſible you could ſuppoſe me ſo depraved as to doubt!—Why this from you, I again repeat? you, ſir, and Lady Bertram, who have inculcated ſuch leſſons of morality—who have given ſuch examples of every Chriſtian virtue—ſhall any one dare to ſuſpect that ſuch were the betrayers of the widow and the orphan?—No, no; I ſay it is impoſſible; you derogate from yourſelf—from my mother, in thus ſtooping to vindicate, which implies a character wants ſupport:

ſupport:—No, Sir Robert, I will not tarniſh your honour, or my own, by liſtening on this ſubject; we will talk, if you chuſe, of the betrayers of my friend, but not of the villifiers of your ſpotleſs name."

Sir Robert endeavoured to calm the perterbation he had raiſed.

" The whole (ſaid Mr. Blackmore) appears a plot ſo artfully laid, ſo nice in its calculations, that I conceive every event was guarded againſt; and no ſtep I could have taken, but they had a ſcheme to counteract it: thus, in the adventure before we reached Soiſſon, the fellow who drove us was doubtleſs bribed to break down; and the fall of Ayſcough's ſervant, which allowed but of one ſeat in his carriage, was a part of the plot.—James, who ran to the aid of Mr. March, was ſeverely wounded, of courſe I was left to purſue alone; and when the ſtorm allowed not of the purpoſed embarkation, a tale had been artfully conſtructed for the ear

of the guide, to throw the odium from Ayſcough, and, by ſlow degrees, to work their ends; but it is uſeleſs to expatiate longer on the varied arts practiſed on the unhappy youth."

"Unhappy, indeed! (ſaid Alicia, who yet had not ſpoke) warm and ingenuous in his temper, how many inſtances riſe to my mind of his frankneſs and candour: alas! his unſuſpecting temper has too haſtily yielded to appearances ſo flattering: what chance had he of contending with the cool, deliberate villainy of Ayſcough—the plauſible and ſoftly inſinuating manner of his ſiſter; ah, whilſt Mr. Blackmore was flying from the purſuit of juſtice, perhaps poor William was carried by ruffians acroſs the country."

"But the letter, Alicia, (ſaid Lady Bertram) you have acknowledged it is his writing."

"That

"That, Lady Bertram, (replied ſhe) makes ſtrongly againſt him; yet, reflect, it is Ayſcough who accuſes; it is Ayſcough perhaps, too, who has planned. Oh! recal the cheerful acts of attention that ſtrongly ſpake his grateful heart.—Oh! I conjure you, my beloved, my honoured friends, diſcard him not totally, till he pleads his own cauſe."

"You plead it ably, Alicia" (ſaid Sir Robert).

"I alſo (Sir Robert) am, like him, an orphan; I too, like him, have unſeen enemies, who by artifice, may deprive me of my friends; and like him, I may be an outcaſt and a wanderer:—wonder not, ſo ſimilarly ſituated, I ſhould plead ſtrongly."

Henry's looks thanked Alicia, and he ſeconded the cauſe ſhe had undertook, with leſs warmth and more method than he did at firſt; and Sir Robert and Lady Bertram promiſed, though the affair of William's carrying

carrying off, in defiance to every law, Mademoiſelle Durand, appeared fully proved, that yet they would even on this ſubject defer their judgements till ſome news reached them regarding William.

The following morning, Mr. Megrel, (who had alſo been an advocate for William, though I gave not a detail of what he ſaid) viſited his friend in Cavendiſh-ſquare, to conſult upon ſteps being taken for the recovering the unfortunate young man; it was thought improper Mr. Blackmore ſhould return to France; but a perſon, on whom Sir Robert could firmly rely, went over to gather ſuch information as he could, concerning the elopement, &c.

A ſearch was alſo ſet on foot for Ayſcough and his ſiſter: at the houſe occupied by him in Spring Garden, it was learned, he had punctually diſcharged the rent due, at the period of his going to France; but ſince that time no account could be gained.

Mr.

Mr. Evans, the lawyer Ayſcough had entruſted with the ſuit, was alſo applied to, by Mr. Megrel, who alſo informed him, the laſt letter he received from Ayſcough was dated Calais; the purport of which was, that the young man for whoſe ſake he had intereſted himſelf, had proved utterly unworthy of any further trouble regarding him; and begged his acceptance of the incloſed ſum, which Mr. Evans ſaid was a very generous acknowledgement for the trouble he had taken; and the letter concluded by ſaying, the ſuit would be dropped by Mr. Ayſcough, at leaſt for the preſent, as he even knew not what had become of his nephew:—nor could Mr. Evans give any account of the witneſſes collected; as all, like thoſe viſited by Mr. Megrel, in Spring Gardens, had diſappeared.

Sir Robert was now reſolved to trace the birth of his foundling, ifpoſſible; and for this purpoſe publiſhed in all the London newspapers, as well as thoſe of the five northern counties of England, an advertiſement, offering

fering a reward of one hundred pounds to the parents of a child found in ſuch a year, in the neighbourhood of Rippon; if they would ſpecify ſuch particulars about the child ſo found, as to convince the parties concerned, they really were ſuch.

This was advertiſed for ſeveral weeks, without ſucceſs; when a letter reached Sir Robert, which informed him, that if ten pounds were ſent incloſed in a letter directed to James Goodenough, to be left at the Poſt Houſe, Bedale, Yorkſhire, till called for, he would, by return of poſt, receive an account of the child:

This was anſwered by Sir Robert, informing the writer, that he muſt come freely forward, and rely upon his honour for the aſſured reward: at the ſame time Mr. Blackmore, who had entered into the ſpirit of the cauſe, took care to reach Bedale privately the ſame day with the letter: and watched the Poſt Houſe till towards evening; a perſon

ſon, muffled up, in a great coat, came to enquire for the letter; at the corner of the market place a boy ſtood holding a horſe, upon which, the perſon who had got the letter mounted, and was inſtantly out of ſight. Mr. Blackmore, though he ſaw not the face, yet was almoſt certain it was Ayſcough; and had followed with an intention of ſpeaking, which his mounting the horſe had prevented.

In about a fortnight's time another epiſtle arrived to Sir Robert, ill written, and worſe ſpelt; it was, indeed, with conſiderable trouble it could he deciphered, the which, when done, it was underſtood that if Sir Robert would meet the writer on a certain ſpot of the Moor accurately deſcribed, that lay north-eaſt of York, he ſhould hear every particular he could deſire from the father of the child found by him and Lady Bertram, in March 17—.

Sir Robert was to name the day, and an anſwer was to be ſent, directed "Thomas Hardie, Reeth, Yorkſhire."

This

This was, alſo, by the good baronet, attended to, and inſtantly anſwered, by his informing the writer of the epiſtle, "he had received it; that if his intentions were good, he would appoint ſuch a place to meet him, as they could confer with ſafety."

An anſwer to this was quickly received, naming an obſcure public-houſe in York.

Again Sir Robert wrote and fixed "that a meeting ſhould take place a week after the date, at the Black Swan, in York;" and incloſed five pounds to bear his expences, as he pleaded poverty.

Miſs Bertram and Alicia were left in Cavendiſh-ſquare, whilſt Sir Robert, his Lady, and ſon, went to York; where, true to the time and place appointed, a man made his appearance, whoſe dreſs, and manner correſponded with the ſtile of the letter.

The fellow ſeemed no way daunted in Sir Robert's preſence, but boldly enquired of what

what ſignification it could be of to him, who were the parents of the child he had found on ſuch a day, month, and year, at ſuch a diſtance from Rippon?'

"To you, it is, I ſuppoſe (ſaid Sir Robert) perfectly immaterial—I doubtleſs have reaſons weighty enough, or I ſhould not aſſign this bag, which contains one hundred pounds, to you, for aſcertaining its parents, (if you have it in your power); but mark what I ſay, I muſt for this gold have an unreſerved and circumſtantial account—I muſt have certain proofs and evidences, in which I cannot be deceived; if, therefore, you are not provided with ſuch, I will not liſten; beſides which, I require you to make, before the Lord Mayor of this city, a formal depoſition, which you muſt ſwear is a juſt and true one."

The fellow turned up his ſtriped woollen cap, and ſcratching his bare pate, ſaid, "aye, your worſhip was always hard as nails, now

now I will have to go back to the Dales for our Suſy."

"Have you, then, (enquired the baronet) known me before?"

"Ah! if your worſhip has forget Tom the Tinker, Tom has not forgot your worſhip;—no, marry, nor ever will:—oft at the caſtle there, at Malieveren, have I ſtood before your worſhip;—why you were the very man, as I may ſay, that tranſported me beyond ſeas:—Lord help us poor tinkers, for we cannot make a few halfpence without ſuch a piece of work:—why, your worſhip, I was committed to York Caſtle here for it."

"If it is neceſſary your wife ſhould come (ſaid the baronet) I will ſend a chaiſe for her, and you, Maſter Thomas, muſt pleaſe to remain here till ſhe comes."

"She would fain have come to be ſure, your worſhip; but (ſays I) you impudent jade, what would you do before his worſhip?

all

all would not do, till I laid on a few hearty thwacks with my cudgel, and then Susy was fain to be quiet, though I would not wonder if she was here by this time after me."

A woman was passing crying laces, whose loud notes vibrating on the nerves of Tom's ears, he who now thought himself as good a man as his worship, threw up the sash without any ceremony, and swearing it was the jade herself, bawled out to enquire what brought her to York.

Susy did not make the retort courteous; and a crowd was beginning to gather around the vender of laces, when she espied Sir Robert Bertram, and cried, "ah, God bless your worship's face; that rascal knew well enough why I came to York; but he wanted to cheat me out of the reward, your worship was to give; but I am the woman that is to tell all about the lad; who has so good a right as myself."

"Susy

Susy was rescued from the audience her eloquence had gathered and retained, by Sir Robert's footman; and ushered into his presence, where scarce this gentle couple could be restrained from coming to blows; at length, Sir Robert assured them if they would not cease scolding, and talk upon the subject for which he had condescended to meet them, he would at no future period listen to the tale; all their virulence was then suspended to attend to the question asked:

"The first was, if they were the parents of the child found near Rippon at such a time? this was affirmed: the next thing enquired by the baronet was, why they had abandoned the child?"

"Tom (said the amiable helpmate of the tinker) was then going beyond seas, for the first time; 'what was it for Tom?'

'Why for eating a bit of mutton I found upon Easingwald Common.'

'Ay, ſo it was; they ſent you off for ſtealing three of farmer Ewbank's fat wedders;—marry, they had better have hanged you at once: ſo your worſhip and your lady's honour, when Tom was juſt catched, I had twins; ſo then he was ſent to the caſtle, and when I was able, I went to ſee him, and ſo he wanted me to go to Virginia with him;—no; marry, ſays I, not I, till the Lord Siſſes ſends me, as he is going to do you;—well, a weary time I had with the bairns, to be ſure; I got Tom's aſs, and there they rode like two princes, but then I had to toil and walk: however, for a year or ſo I bore it, now begging honeſtly for them, or ſome times helping myſelf to any odd thing I could light upon; then the aſs was ſtolen by ſome of our folks, ſo then I had both to carry; when being at Rippon, I ſaw, one day, your worſhip's coach ſtand in the market-place, juſt oppoſite the great inn door, ſo I knew your honour's ladyſhip was very charitable, ſo I watches till I ſaw you as you were coming out at the door, and begged for my poor fatherleſs twins,

twins, and you gave me money; well, thinks I, and a lucky thought it was—here is this fine rich lady been married a long time, and has had no bairn—marry, I wiſh ſhe had one of thoſe heavy lads, my back is juſt broke, ſince I loſt poor Dickey; ſo I heard which way your worſhip's was going, and off I trudged, till I came about a ſtone's throw beyond the three mile ſtone on the road towards Malieveren, when I heard the coach coming along, then I took one of the lads, and laid him on a little bank, on which grew a whin buſh all yellow with flower, and crept cloſe behind a thick thorn buſh which grew at the edge of a deep ditch, in which I laid.'

" Henry trembled with agitation, as he ſaw from the look that was interchanged between his parents, that thus far the tale carried conviction with it; but Henry could not deem it poſſible, that the deareſt friend of his heart owed his birth to ſuch wretches as theſe; gladly, at that minute, would the generous heir of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram,

tram, have reſigned his future claim to the lands of the late baron of Malieveren, could it have been proved this evidence of William's birth was falſe; unwillingly he liſtened, whilſt Suſy continued her tale, ſaying, ſhe had laid ſtill in the ditch, and though ſhe dared not peep up, yet had heard the carriage ſtop, and exactly and preciſely repeated what both the baronet and his lady had ſaid, as well as the ſervants.

" Sir Robert then enquired what dreſs the child had been left in; which Suſy alſo minutely deſcribed; ſaying, that his under garment was of ſtriped linſey woolſey, above which was a piece of an old red petticoat of her own."

' But was there, (enquired the baronet) no mark upon the child; nor was there no other part of his dreſs that you can remember and deſcribe?'

'O yes! your worſhip, I was not done—he wants the firſt joint of two toes upon his left foot.'

'How did ſuch an accident happen?' ſaid Sir Robert.

'He was playing (ſhe replied) on the ground, and a ſtone fell on his foot, and almoſt cruſhed it to pieces; and as for the dreſs, he had, tied round his neck by a piece of grey worſted, a piece of money, which had a hole punched through it; for, when I bid Tom farewell at the caſtle, he took out two ſilver pennies—no, I think they are more like groats, and laying one exactly upon the other, bored a hole through, and bid me give them to the two lads, if he did not come back to remember their father by; ſo, when I laid the elder one down by the road ſide, I thought he ſhould have his father's laſt legacy, for I never thought then I ſhould have ſeen Tom again; and here, your worſhip, is the other groat! that I have kept ever ſince, and if the holes do not tally (if

(if you have the other) why I aſk no reward for what I have told you.'

" All convinced Sir Robert and his Lady of the truth of what they had with much attention liſtened to; as the date and apparent age of the child perfectly agreed, as did his complexion, with the way he had been expoſed; for his little head appeared unuſed to be covered by a hat; and his face it was evident had been ſubjected to all weather and change of ſeaſon: his tattered garments were ſuch as deſcribed; and the left foot wanted, as ſhe ſaid, the firſt joints of two toes; yet theſe circumſtances might have been noticed by the ſervants, but the piece of money tied round the neck of the infant, had not; nor could have been obſerved by them, as it was concealed by the rags he was cloathed in."

" Lady Bertram, who with Sir Robert were alone in the coach, found it, and after examining it, had, upon her return home to Malieveren, depoſited it in a ſecret part of

her cabinet, where it had laid undiſturbed, till Henry, by his mother's directions, found it, and brought it to York, from which place he went to Malieveren, the firſt day of their arrival. This piece of money, which was neither penny nor groat, but a Roman coin, nearly defaced, was, by Sir Robert fitted to its fellow; no other proof could be needed to atteſt the veracity of Suſy."

'Is it poſſible!' exclaimed Henry, as he turned aſide.

'It is poſſible (ſaid the baronet, who fully comprehended his ſon's exclamation) and I feel moſt truly the extreme mortification this will cauſe to a mind keenly alive to degradation.'

'Why I did not make an earlier and ſtricter, or rather, when William grew up, why I did not renew my enquiries, was to ſpare the pain I knew it would inflict; but now it is a neceſſary ſtep.'

Turning

" Turning to the tinker and his helpmate, Sir Robert ſaid, he now only required they ſhould ſwear, before the Lord Mayor, to the truth of the tale, which ſhould be taken down in a formal depoſition.

" No heſitation was made to this part of the buſineſs, and Sir Robert giving them the ſtipulated ſum, they departed.

CHAPTER IV.

HENRY, whoſe mind was ill at eaſe, and who felt he ſhould prove a ſtupid companion to Sir Robert and her Ladyſhip, quitted them to viſit the theatre; the play was in the laſt act, when a kind of buſtle in the pit drew his attention, which he ſaw was occaſioned by a gentleman, in a great coat and ſlouched hat, handing out a young lady; the houſe being full, he found much difficulty: as the lady turned round, a voice from the other ſide of the pit uttered an ejacu-

ejaculation of ſurprize: Mademoiſelle Durand was all Henry could diſtinguiſh; but it operated like a ſhock of electricity; he ſtopped not to weigh probabilities, but leaped inſtantly into the pit; the perſon was only two benches from him who ſpoke, and was ſtanding yet, in an attitude of aſtoniſhment, when he was ſeized by Mr. Bertram, who loudly enquired 'what he knew of Mademoiſelle Durand.'

"The man now appeared more aſtoniſhed than at firſt; then, obſequiouſly bowing, informed his haſty interrogater, that Mademoiſelle Durand had juſt quitted the houſe."

'Come with me, then, if you know Mademoiſelle Durand;' and without waiting a reply, Mr. Bertram pulled the terrified Frenchman (for ſo his broken Engliſh proclaimed him) acroſs the benches to the pit door.

"That this was the fair nun and William March, Henry felt fully convinced of; in quitting the theatre he ſuppoſed he ſaw them only a little way before him, but ſuddenly

loſt ſight of them at the turning of the ſtreet; when, following on again, he imagined he beheld them; thus the purſuit was continued for ſome time, till hopeleſs, and reſolving to return to the Black Swan, he took leiſure to enquire of his companion, 'what Mademoiſelle Durand it was he meant?' the man ſaid, the daughter of Count de Marigny, who was in the convent of the Benedictines, at Cambray, and who was ſuppoſed to have eloped with an Engliſh gentleman:"

'But how came you (ſaid Mr. Bertram) to know the lady?'

'Becauſe, (replied the man) I was one of the count's domeſtics; and it is not two months ago ſince I quitted France, with an intention of commencing hair-dreſſer in London; but not finding I was likely to ſucceed, I came to York in the coach, and if I liked it, I meant to ſtay: but I think of proceeding to Edinburgh, where there reſides, at preſent, a family who will befriend me.'

" Mr.

" Mr. Bertram, giving the man ſome money for the trouble he had given him, wiſhed a good night at the inn door.

" Henry related his adventures to Sir Robert, who judged the hour too late to make any enquiries, yet thought it really might be William, who in his letter to Mr. Blackmore had ſaid, he would not venture to behold his benefactors: that it was the fair nun, the evidence of the Frenchmen made almoſt indiſputable; and the evident diſguiſe of her companion corroborated the probability that it was William, who, ſeeing his late friend, Mr. Bertram, had inſtantly quitted the houſe.

" The following morning they found, that in the north ſtage a young gentleman and lady had arrived the preceding day, and had their baggage taken to a ſhabby public-houſe, the maſter of which ſaid, ' the lady was a foreigner; that in the evening they went out, with a deſign to return and ſleep at his houſe, but that a chaiſe came and took them away ſoon after they returned back; nor had they

been gone many minutes, when a gentleman came and enquired, if two people had not been there, dreſſed exactly as thoſe who had gone away in the chaiſe; and when the gentleman heard they were gone, he ſwore violently, and ſaid, he was certain it was his nephew and Miſs Durand; but if he had her ſhe might depend upon it, ſhe ſhould be a nun, for all ſhe had tried to prevent it.

" Sir Robert at laſt found the poſtilion who drove this young couple to Tadcaſter, where they had taken a freſh carriage.

" Henry went to Tadcaſter; there he learned they had been purſued by a gentleman, in his own carriage, who overtook them near Thorp Arch, when the Tadcaſter chaiſe was diſcharged: this was all the information that could be obtained, as from Thorp Arch no account could be gained what road they had taken."

That

That the parties were the unfortunate William March and the daughter of the Count de Marigny, ſcarce a doubt could be entertained; or that Ayſcough had purſued and overtaken them; yet Ayſcough ſtill believing, or pretending to believe, William was his nephew, when ſuch certain, ſuch incontrovertible proofs, had been adduced by the tinker and his wife, that he was their ſon, ſeemed quite, at preſent, incomprehenſible; except as it further aſſured Sir Robert, that malice, and a hidden deſire of revenge were the inexhauſtible ſprings which had hitherto directed the operations of Ayſcough.

The elopement from Cambray appeared in a different point of view to Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, as it now ſeemed too evident the wretches had accompliſhed their aim; for that they had found, whilſt the heart and morals of their victim remained uncorrupted, he would never be brought to join in their infernal ſchemes; that they artfully awakened his pity, his ſenſibility, and

inſiduouſly drove him to the brink of a precipice, down which their infernal ſchemes had plunged him; and by this means they expected to cut off all intercourſe with his former friends and benefactors; and that each ſtep would but plunge him deeper and deeper in vice, and conſequently, more in their power.

Sir Robert having nothing farther to detain him at York, ſet out again for London.

Mary, as ſhe liſtened to the tale of William's birth, wept bitterly: no, ſhe could not, would not believe ſuch creatures were his parents; it had only been for the ſake of the reward, they had ſworn to the truth of what they ſaid.

Although the whole was again explained to her, yet ſtill Miſs Bertram gave a reluctant aſſent to the truth of a ſtory ſhe no longer could pretend to ſay ſhe diſbelieved; and the firſt opportunity ſhe had, when alone with Henry, ſhe again queſtioned him regarding it;

it; and if he really believed the ſtory himſelf? which Henry aſſured her he did, though, at firſt, pride and prejudice had warmly combatted certain proofs of its authenticity.

Mary, however, ſaid, ſhe wiſhed ſhe had it in her power to puniſh the tinker and his wife.

During the abſence of Sir Robert at York, the perſon who had been ſent over to France, returned with an account of the elopement of Mademoiſelle Durand, confirmed by the Superior of the Benedictine Dames of Cambray; alſo the Count de Marigny had ſet on foot a moſt diligent ſearch after the fugitives; againſt both of whom he had vowed vengeance; but no news, although Sir Robert ſlackened not his endeavors, could be obtained of the miſguided William.

Letters were received by the May packet from Mrs. Dalrymple, to Mr. Megrell and Alicia, which gave a free concurrence to the plan propoſed, for Alicia's reſiding with the family of Bertram; an offer that had happened very opportunely, as Mr. Dalrymple's affairs were now in a very embarraſſed ſtate; a moſt dreadful hurricane had entirely deſtroyed all his ſugar works, and the canes upon his eſtates.

Mrs. Dalrymple ſeeing no probability of ſpeedily returning to Britain, had ſent her two children over to Scotland.

The repeated misfortunes of her generous and amiable friend, deeply affected Alicia; and ſhe ſighed for an independancy, that would enable her to ſhew the ſenſe of gratitude ſhe felt to her early benefactreſs.

The ſummer and autumn were ſpent by the family of Sir Robert Bertram in various excurſions;

excurſions; they had been at Malieveren, but their ſtay was ſhort; not in any place had they reſided long together; nothing, however, worth relating occurred to our heroine, who was, indeed, increaſing the influence ſhe had already obtained in the hearts of thoſe eſteemed friends.

In November Sir Robert was in Cavendiſh-ſquare, attending the opening of parliament; and, as they uſually did, the family quitted London for Acorn Bank, before Chriſtmas.—This viſit recalled to Alicia's mind, ſtrongly, the impreſſion ſhe received, when firſt, at Acorn Bank, ſhe ſaw Sir Robert Bertram, and wandered at the apathy ſhe felt regarding her future proſpects.

She was a dependant on the generoſity of a family, with whom, in ſome way, ſhe believed ſhe was connected; yet now, as if forgetting all the anxiety ſhe had ſuſtained upon this ſubject, ſhe repoſed with ſafety upon their friendſhip, although ſhe had reaſon to ſuppoſe,

ſuppoſe, that from ſome branch of it, her own family had ſuffered injuſtice.

But from this ſtate of apparent indifference to the future, our heroine was rouſed at Acorn Bank, where it was the annual cuſtom of the good Baronet to inſpect his affairs, which were methodized and preſented to him by Mr. Heaviſide, his chief agent, regularly, a few days before the commencement of the new year.

It was in the evening of one of the days Sir Robert had thus ſpent, when all the family were aſſembled in the room where they had ſupped, the converſation held by Sir Robert and his own ſon with Mr. Heaviſide turned upon the improvement that might be made in the Oakdale eſtate; after talking ſome time upon this ſubject, Mr. Heaviſide ſaid, that by a plan he had in agitation, ſhould Sir Robert approve of it, the eſtate might be made worth between two and three hundred

hundred pounds per year more, and that by being at no kind of expence either.

'You mean, (ſaid Sir Robert) I ſuppoſe, by my bringing a bill into parliament for the incloſing Dale Head Moor, upon which the eſtate borders.'

'No, Sir Robert, (he replied) you have already diſcloſed to me your intentions on that head; what I allude to is, that the hall ſhould be entirely pulled down, and the ground ploughed up; after the wood, which will now decreaſe from its age, in value, is cut down, then I would build a farm-houſe in the middle of the ground, which will divide into a neat, compact farm; the wood will pay all expences, and leave, I think, a few hundreds."

"But why, (ſaid Lady Bertram, whom Sir Robert always made it a point of conſulting) why, Mr. Heaviſide, would you pull the hall down? it might ſerve for the farmers as it is.

I grant

'I grant your ladyſhip, it might, (replied Mr. H—) could I perſuade any one to live in it; but I am certain not a man upon the Oakdale eſtate would venture to do ſo was I to let him the farm for a third of its value, was that the annexed condition.'

"Miſs Bertram, putting her face forward as ſhe patted Mr. Heaviſides' arm, ſaid, 'I believe you ſir, for I would not enter it again for a thouſand pounds; and I would not not enter Sir Philip's chamber, or look in that horrid glaſs again, if Sir Robert would give me all Oakdale eſtate."

All laughed, or at leaſt affected to laugh, at the earneſtneſs with which Mary had ſpoke.

Alicia roſe, and was about to leave the room, but Lady Bertram begged ſhe would ſtay a few minutes, as ſhe wanted to ſpeak with her, regarding their going the next day to Hertford.

"Pray

"Pray ſit down, Alicia, ſaid Mary, drawing her back to her chair; you are frightened, I proteſt; ſee Henry, is not Alicia quite pale! O lord, you look juſt like the face I ſaw: Alicia now thought, to plead indiſpoſition would be but to bring the raillery of her lively friend upon her; and was again ſeated."

The converſation of Sir Robert and Mr. Heaviſide had not been interrupted by this movement of Alicia, who heard the baronet ſay, 'you wrote to me laſt ſpring regarding letting it.'

"I did ſo, replied Mr. H—, and the perſon was all over it; nay, if I recollect right, Jackſon told me he ſlept there one night; I dare ſay he would be very glad to have let it, for he declared to me, the other week, he had been at more trouble, and had more vexation about the hall, than all the reſt of the Oakdale eſtate; upon which he has been ſteward a great many years now; even the fooliſh fellow who rented the gardens, and had

had them cheap enough I am ſure, gave them up laſt Martinmas, with the old pretence, that a ghoſt haunted the hall.'

" Does it, ſaid Jackſon, ſpoil your garden ſtuff, or ſpoil your fruit?"

" The man ſtared at Jackſon—' Nay, for the matter of that, I cannot ſay; but laſt ſummer I could ſell nought for it, for the folks all round about uſed to come to walk in the garden, and buy my fruit: now, why I have gone twenty, ay thirty miles with it, nobody comes near me for the ghaiſt, ſince it overturned Sir Robert's coach.'

Jackſon gave the ſtupid fellow a hearty reprimand, for delivering and propagating ſuch idle tales; and told him, he ſhould not have the gardens at any rent, for he propoſed ſtaying, if it was lowered.

' I have not enquired very recently, but when I did, no application had been made; therefore, I think it is a great pity to allow all that ground to lay waſte; and waſte it

it will lay, I am certain, while the hall ſtands.'

Henry had kept his eyes fixed upon Alicia; to him her agitation was viſible, in ſpite of the efforts ſhe made to conceal it.

"Pray, Mr. Heaviſide, enquired Miſs Bertram, does the ſame woman live in the hall that did when we were there laſt winter?"

"No, (replied the ſteward) ſhe left it the next day; and Jackſon, knowing it would be impoſſible to get any perſon in the neighbourhood, ſent to Bertram, from whence an old man and woman were brought, and ſeveral advantages promiſed to them, but they no ſooner, I ſuppoſe, got acquainted with the inhabitants of St. Mary's Oak, than away they went: ſoon after that, the application was made to Jackſon to let the hall; and though the ſpirits were not given as a reaſon, I dare ſay they had operated as one; for

for the perſon told Jackſon, that at firſt he ſuppoſed it would have ſuited him, but he now found it would not."

Several different ſervants Jackſon hired, but, if they came at all, they ſcarcely ſtaid time ſufficient to light the fires and air the rooms.

"Jackſon was quite wearied, and came to aſk me what he ſhould do; 'remove into it yourſelf;' he ſhook his head, and talked of his wife being infected with notions that would not allow him to do ſo; and I then told him to lock it up, for I would ſee the baronet at Chriſtmas, and meant to offer my opinion in regard to its being a mere nuiſance upon the eſtate."

"It is, (ſaid Sir Robert) a nuiſance which ſhall remain upon it for my life."

"If this, Sir Robert, (replied Mr. H—) is your determination, in regard to the houſe, I hope you will allow the wood to be cut,

and

and the whole of the ground laid out in a farm, as the hall may continue to be ſhut up, and a houſe built at a little diſtance."

" In Oakdale hall, ſaid the baronet, with a ſeries air, my anceſtors have lived and died, till my father's time, from Queen Elizabeth's reign, when the brave Sir Philip almoſt rebuilt it; the pleaſure ground and gardens were then the pride and boaſt of the country; nor ſhall they, in my life-time, be deſtroyed.

" I have been no prodigal; my income, you well know, Mr. Heaviſide, is more than equal to my expenditure; it ſhall not be increaſed by this means; my grand children ſhall not be told, that in ſuch a place ſtood the ancient manſion of their progenitor, which I levelled to the ground; and I have other reaſons, beſt known to myſelf, why Oakdale Hall ſhall not be pulled down, or its gardens turned into fields."

' I have done, Sir Robert, (ſaid Mr. Heaviſide) and am ſorry I mentioned it.'

Lady Bertram riſing, was followed by her daughter and Alicia, to her ladyſhip's dreſſing room; where, after a ſhort converſation, our heroine, bidding good night, retired to her own apartment, ſadly depreſſed by the painful feelings excited by the purpoſed demolition of the hall; and felt truly thankful Sir Robert had not agreed to the propoſal; yet the concluſion of his laſt ſpeech ſeemed ſtill ſounding in her ears; and what are 'the weighty reaſons beſt known to himſelf?' was the queſtion Alicia mentally repeated 'was it poſſible he knew what it contained? did he know of the deeds committed in it?—No; it is impoſſible!' ſhe audibly exclaimed: 'no, Sir Robert has other reaſons!' Now ſeating herſelf, every ſcene of her infantine days was recalled—the dark grove where ſhe had rambled with her mother—the terrace—the two venerable walnut trees, even theſe would have fallen beneath the axe Mr. Heaviſides would have raiſed for the deſtruction of all theſe beloved mementoes:—had he but ſpared theſe: but no, all would have gone; ſuch were

were the reflections of Alicia, who, when she met at breakfast the next morning the light-hearted Mary, was rallied by her for looking so unusually serious.

Henry remarked it also, yet parried his sister's raillery; well aware the conversation of the preceding evening had caused the change he perceived in Alicia; but when a week had passed away, and he had seen her mingle in many a gay and cheerful party, wearing, as before, the same look of ease and vivacity; yet, if he found her alone, she was serious and thoughtful, fearing somewhat had happened to distress his fair friend, he ventured to hint his suspicions.

"Henry, (said she, with a collected and serious tone of voice) fostered in the lap of prosperity, I had learned to forget myself; I remembered not I was an humble dependent upon the bounty of Lady Bertram; but sharing in the affluence by which I am surrounded—treated upon equal terms with my

benefactors—bleſt too with ſuch friends as you and Miſs Bertram, I ſeemed ſo fully to enjoy the preſent, that I forgot the paſt, and thought not of the future, till the converſation which was held regarding Oakdale, conjured up to my view every ſcene, over which oblivion, appeared as if fallen, and fully recalled to my mind, that the time faſt approaches, when I have much to learn: to this period I had been commanded to look forward, as to a ſeaſon of trials; though kept ignorant of what was their exact nature; yet this command, for a time, I ſeemed to have forgotten:—ah! how ill does the late heedleſſneſs of manners I aſſumed, agree with the fortitude I was early bid to practiſe; ill, very ill did the apathy of mind and diſſipation of ſpirits I felt, fit me for bearing any change of fortune; but I have taken myſelf ſeverely to taſk, and I am glad to find you think me ſerious, Henry."

"Unacquainted with the cauſes which influence you, Alicia, and conſcious of the rectitude of your heart; conſcious too of your poſ-

poſſeſſing an underſtanding and diſcernment far above your years, it becomes me not to ſay, diſcard thoſe gloomy ideas which rob you of your uſual vivacity; for gay or ſerious, equally are you dear, equally are you pleaſing to me."

CHAPTER V.

SOON after this converſation paſſed between Mr. Bertram and Alicia, the family quitted Acorn Bank for London, where a few days afterwards, the Earl of Knaſborough arrived: To him, Sir Robert had written a full detail regarding the affair of William March (for ſo he was continued to be ſtiled, although it was found his real name was Hardie) and in particular regarding the elopement.

Lord Morville ſoon recovered of his wounds, and his father had accompanied him to

to ſeveral of the Italian cities; but quitted him at Rome, from whence the earl ſet out, returning through France.—At Paris he had met with the Count de Mavigny, from whom he learned, his daughter had not been recovered though all means, both ſpiritual and temporal, had been tried; and that now his ſon had ſet out, reſolving to viſit every European country; nor to give up the ſearch of his ſiſter, till he had at leaſt certain intelligence that ſhe was beyond his reach.

"The retreat the raſh couple have choſen, (ſaid Sir Robert) ſeems, at preſent, quite impervious."

"It does, indeed, (ſaid Henry) had it not been ſo, long ere now would poor William have been reſtored to the paths of rectitude, which he ſo fooliſhly quitted; for, could I but once more behold him, I would make him liſten to the admonitions of friendſhip."

Much about the time of the Earl of Knaſborough's return, Mr. Evans, the

lawyer, called on Mr. Meynel.—" I have brought (ſaid he) a letter to ſhew you, from my old client, Ayſcough; he and the young man he calls nephew, wiſh me to take the affair in hand again; but I think nothing could have been more fooliſh than to have given it up when they did; at a time when the witneſſes were ready, and much expence incurred; now all *that* is to be gone over again. It is, Mr. Meynell, a ſtrange buſineſs, a very ſtrange buſineſs indeed; and I am determined to have nothing to do in it—I ſhould have little regard for my character, after what has paſſed, were I to oppoſe Sir Robert Bertram, and defend the cauſe of an impoſter; but here is the letter, you will find it a ſingular one: it has, you may ſee by the poſt mark, been a ſhip letter, and put in at the Portſmouth office."

Mr. Meynell took the letter, the contents to which were, nearly as follow:

" I have found my nephew, Lord Malieveren; I met with him and his fair nun in England;

England; but, at his earneſt requeſt, (after he had received my forgiveneſs for the raſh ſtep he had taken) accompanied them abroad, on condition he did not marry Mademoiſelle Durand, as I had other views for him; to this he partly agreed, and is now fully ſatiſfied I was right, when I told him, except for intereſted motives, he ſhould not think of marriage at preſent; indeed the fair nun is neglected for a lady he has had the good fortune to render himſelf agreeable to, in the town where we reſide.

" I have, therefore, (finding him flexible in ſuch points as at firſt he was unwilling to arrange as I wiſhed) again reſolved to aſſert his claim upon the Malieveren eſtate; and beg you to accept the incloſed as a retaining fee in his behalf; and alſo, that you would make the following propoſal to Sir Robert Bertram—that, if he will give his daughter to my nephew, he will marry her, and make the ſame ſettlement his grandfather made upon Lady Bertram's mother; his lordſhip,

if this is agreed to, will exact no account of the ſums received during his minority, by Sir Robert; nor will he aſk any dowry with Miſs Bertram: by this means, the baronet will avoid a tedious and expenſive ſuit, and his daughter will be eſtabliſhed in life; but ſhould he refuſe, beg he will put an advertiſement into the London Evening Poſt, merely ſignifying Mr. A—'s propoſals were not accepted by the baronet.—I ſhall be ready, at the receipt of this intelligence, to ſet out with my nephew for England; but ſhall not ſee you, ſir, till I have collected the now diſperſed witneſſes."

"I ſhall not, Mr. Meynell, (ſaid Evans) make this inſolent propoſal: the letter is, however, at your ſervice; I ſhall give the bank bill, ſent as my retaining fee, to counſellor Kilvington, to whom I find Ayſcough has alſo written; he, I am convinced, will have no ſcruples, although he was certain of his client's knavery."

Mr.

Mr. Meynell haſtened to Cavendiſh-ſquare, with this inſolent letter in his pocket:—Sir Robert was greatly ſhocked at the depravity of William March; if the account Ayſcough gave of him was juſt, he appeared loſt to every hope which had been entertained, that he might yet return to the paths of virtue.

Of the iſſue of the ſuit no fear could be entertained; as Sir Robert had the depoſition of the tinker, which proved the birth of the claimant of the eſtates of Malieveren beyond a doubt.

Lady Bertram and her ſon now joined the conference; and a meſſage was diſpatched, requeſting Mr. Evans' company, to whom the baronet preſented a ſum which doubled that ſent him by Aſcough, and deſired his aſſiſtance againſt the artful villain; for ſuch, none preſent in the leaſt heſitated to ſuppoſe him.

By the way pointed out, an anſwer was ſent to Ayſcough, as follows:

" The baronet to whom Mr. A. thought proper to make certain propoſals, deems them, as they were meant, inſults: the unhappy young man, Mr. A. has ſeduced from his duty, will ſtill be received by his benefactor, provided he does not long defer his return.—Mr. A. is alſo informed, that the contents of his letter, which contained theſe propoſals, are placed with Mr. A.'s law friend, as Mr. E. could not accept any favours on the terms annexed by Mr. A."

The following day Mr. Evans again viſited Sir Robert, informing him the buſineſs wore a ſerious aſpect, Kilvington having told him the witneſſes were all ready for bringing forward on the part of Ayſcough; and that it behoved Sir Robert to be prepared for his defence.

" You, doubtleſs, have the tinker and his wife's depoſition; but I think it neceſſary they

they ſhould be found alſo; and in readineſs to bring forward."

"I have (ſaid Sir Robert) the depoſition; this is it," turning to his eſcrutoire and taking from it a folded paper ſealed up.

Henry took it: "This, Sir Robert, (ſaid he) cannot be the depoſition, for as I hold it to the light, there appears nothing but blank paper."

Sir Robert examined it as Henry had done, and was of the ſame opinion; he then broke the ſeal, it was a ſheet of blank paper folded.

That the depoſition had been taken away with a bad intention, was evident, but how, no one could do more than conjecture, and thoſe conjectures tended to the belief that the theft had happened at York.

"I ſuppoſe (ſaid Mr. Evaus) the tinker and his wife may be found, and the depoſition, in that caſe, becomes immaterial."

Henry agreed with Sir Robert, that no time ſhould be loſt, but that the next day he ſhould ſet out for York, in order, firſt to enquire concerning the change of the paper which contained the depoſition, as it was moſt probably ſome contrivance of Ayſcough's, who, doubtleſs, had been in York at the time.

Henry drove to the Black Swan, in York, but could gain no information reſpecting the theft, farther than that a ſervant, who had lived at the houſe when it was committed, was ſoon after convicted of illicit practices, and diſcharged; but no account could be obtained concerning what afterwards became of this perſon, who was ſuppoſed to have gone to London after quitting York.

Of the tinker and his helpmate Mr. Bretram received a more perfect account; he had been committed, the May after receiving the reward from Sir Robert, to York Caſtle; and tried at the Summer aſſizes for a robbery, and had been ſentenced, on that account, to tranſportation; in this voyage, the loving Suſy had accompanied her affectionate huſband, having ſailed from Hull in a ſhip for Virginia, in the month of September.

With this unpleaſant intelligence Mr. Bertram returned to London.

The buſineſs now wore a very unfavourable aſpect for the baronet; as, if Ayſcough had really procured witneſſes that would, for his gold, ſwear to the marriage of Lord Malieveren, and the birth of the child, his producing evidence of his finding it, would have no other effect than to ſerve, as it were, to corroborate the perjuries of Ayſcough.

James

James, it was true, had been witneſs to the tinker's depoſition, and he was alſo the only evidence that could ſwear to the finding of the child; as the coachman was ſince dead, and the other footman had rode forward to Malieveren, when they quitted Rippon.

When Mr. Evans had the conducting of the buſineſs, no certificate then had been obtained of the marriage; but Mr. Kilvington had told him, this was owing to Mr. Ayſcough not having been properly informed upon the ſubject, by his ſiſter; but that now, though he would not ſay at preſent where the marriage had been contracted; yet upon the trial, ample and ſufficient vouchers would be produced to prove it had been a legal contract.

The anxiety of mind Lady Bertram ſuſtained, ſeemed viſibly to impair her health. "Sir Robert's eſtates (ſhe would ſometimes ſay to Alicia) are ſufficient to ſupport the uſual ſtyle we live in: Henry is neither proud, ſelfiſh,

ſelfiſh, nor ambitious; and Sir Robert has taken care that the fortune of Mary will not burthen him; gladly would we all unite in giving up the lands of Malieveren to William March, was he really the ſon of my brother; and never could I feel ſufficiently grateful to providence in making me the inſtrument of preſerving his life; but it is indeed mortifying to think there is a poſſibility the poſſeſſions of my family muſt be reſigned to an impoſter, and that ſtill more to aggravate the mortification, that impoſtor has been reared in our very boſoms—cheriſhed as a beloved child;—ſcarce, Alicia, as I think of it, can I deem it poſſible, that human nature can be ſo depraved: life, education, and a certain eſtabliſhment for his future ſupport (as Sir Robert had purchaſed him, ſome time back, a commiſſion), all theſe were beſtowed; in return we aſked but his good conduct: alas! Alicia, William March, too ſure, proves that vice is hereditary; that no education, no precept or example, will deſtroy, or effectually counteract the

the dormant ſeeds; for no ſooner has he found aſſociates to call them into action, than he turns on his benefactors, and leagues with villains to deprive them of lands, he well knows are theirs, by juſt and legal inheritance.

" O no, Alicia, it is not the loſs of Malieveren; it is the baſe ingratitude of the claimant that thus unceaſingly preys upon my ſpirits, joined to the odium caſt equally upon the memory of a beloved brother, and the fair unblemiſhed character of Sir Robert."

Henry ſtill would endeavour at vindication, for his once amiable friend.

" On this ſubject, Henry, (would Sir Robert ſay) your natural generoſity of character miſleads you; William is every way deſpicable; reflect but upon the inſult offered to your ſiſter, by him; much rather would I have given Mary to William March, as I once knew him (though found to be the off-

ſpring

ſpring of ſuch wretches as we learned laſt year at York, he was,) than after his late trampling upon all laws of morality, and connecting himſelf with a woman who broke every tie ſhe had been taught to look upon as ſacred, even could it be proved he was the true heir to the late Lord Malieveren, and of courſe Lady Bertram's nephew."

Miſs Bertram, whoſe attachments were always violent, now ſhewed as ſtrong a diſlike to William, as ſhe had formerly a friendſhip, and was the loudeſt in her expreſſions of averſion; yet thoſe teſtimonies of the alteration in her ſentiments were generally conveyed in ſome light jeſt, regarding the propoſal made for her union with him—or ſome ſally of ſeverely pointed wit, which was ſure, if in Lady Bertram's hearing, to draw down reproof: ſhe wiſhed her daughter to feel a proper ſenſe of the inſult, but ſhe could not patiently hear her treat a ſubject that ſat ſo painfully upon her ſpirits with ſuch levity.

It was William who formed, at this period, the chief topic of converſation between Henry and Alicia; they remembered him both, generous and virtuous, and although it was impoſſible to deny the errors he had been guilty of, yet ſtill his memory was dear to them; and ſcarce, as they recalled the innumerable inſtances he had diſplayed of the unvaried uprightneſs of his ſoul, could they believe that it was the William March ſo amiable, ſo every way eſtimable, whom they had loved ſo affectionately, who hadcarried off Mademoiſelle Durand, and who finally had leagued with Ayſcough to inſult, to defame, and to plunder the family to whom he owed every thing: many a plan was ſuggeſted by the romantic and enthuſiaſtic friends of William, all tending to reclaim him from his errors, and reſtore him to himſelf; but thoſe plans at preſent appeared not feaſible even to Henry and Alicia, as again they reviewed them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE important period advanced when Alicia was to open the packet conſigned to her charge, for in June ſhe would be ſixteen, the age fixed by her mother; but this did not ſo much engroſs her attention as might have been ſuppoſed; for ſhe was now called upon, by every tie of affection and gratitude, to exert herſelf in order to ſupport Lady Bertram, who repoſed on Alicia with confidence; to her, and her alone did her ladyſhip, young as ſhe was, freely diſcloſe the ſorrows which deſtroyed her health and peace;

peace; in our heroine, Lady Bertram found a friend, though ſympathiſing, yet cheerful, whoſe judgment was matured far beyond her age, and whoſe reſources of converſation amuſed, when all elſe failed; thus highly called upon, Alicia aſſumed the character all her life had been a prelude to; it was to her that her ladyſhip looked for comfort, for conſolation; fearful of diſtreſſing Sir Robert, or Henry with complaints, Alicia was her friend her nurſe;—it was ſhe that made home pleaſant to Sir Robert, cheerful to Henry; ſhe too, it was, whoſe prudence reſtrained the giddy ſallies of Miſs Bertram; ſuch were the employments of our heroine at Acorn Bank, where the family had gone early in April, and thus, in rouſing the dormant powers of her mind, into active and conſtant exertion of the energy of her character, Alicia gave little heed to the nearneſs of her own approaching trial; yet as it drew nearer, it would, ſpite of all her reſolution, obtrude on her thoughts: completely abſorbed in thinking of ſuch circumſtances as related to this

this period, now near at hand, ſhe was ſeated on a garden chair in the front of the obſervatory, one fine evening in the laſt week of May; ſhe had taken out Mr. Kirby's letter, upon which her eyes were fixed, when Mr. Bertram advanced: "You ſeem, (ſaid he) Alicia, too much engaged to obſerve your friends."

"I was indeed, (ſhe replied) I was thinking, Henry, of thoſe I ſhall never more behold, and of a period now faſt approaching, when I have much to learn, and I have cauſe to believe, much alſo to ſuſtain."

"Say, then, Alicia, at that period can my preſence ſuſtain, will my ſervices be needful?"

"Ah! Henry, at that period your preſence would give me a degree of fortitude beyond that which I ſhall feel; but there exiſts reaſons why I muſt not aſk your aid."

"This ſtrange, this myſterious reſerve almoſt diſtracts me, Alicia; the hints at various times you have given—your emotions at Oakdale—ah! rack me not thus with ſuſ-

pence!—alas! Alicia, you know not—but why do I complain; I who implicitly rely on your promiſe, to diſcloſe to me this apparent myſtery in your ſituation, at ſuch a time as you judge it right; I know you deem me incapable of betraying you, or at Oakdale you would not have in part diſcloſed your terrors: ah, Alicia! thoſe terrors! what were their import? I wiſh but to be allowed to know, as early as you can inform me, how is it you appear connected with a family, all of whom, myſelf excepted, are ignorant of your origin."

"Ah! Henry, even if I were not bound by my promiſe, why ſhould I impart to your ſympathiſing boſom the doubts, the horrors, which agitate mine; when doubt is changed to certainty, however horrid that certainty is, you, Henry, ſhall ſhare my knowledge, unleſs my promiſe ſtill binds me to ſilence."

Mr. Bertram taking the hand of his fair friend, ſaid, with a kind of earneſt ſolemnity of

of manner, " thoſe doubts, thoſe horrors, Alicia, already ſit here; both of us would ſuffer leſs, was I allowed fully to participate; I have not, I cannot forget the pallid countenance ſeen in Sir Philip's chamber, and had it not been that your commands reſtrained enquiry on the ſubject, I ſhould have never quitted Oakdale; were you and Mary ſuffered ſuch an alarm—.

' O, Henry, ſpeak not to me of that appearance; it convulſes me with horror; with apprehenſions horrible, yet vague; but I muſt not ſhrink from—I ought rather to accuſtom myſelf to think on ſubjects terrible and gloomy;—yes, every way repugnant to human nature, amongſt ſuch ſights ſhortly muſt I learn what hitherto has been concealed from me; then, Henry, perhaps, I may be bid to hate you, and to look on the family from whence you ſprung as the foes of mine; but no, I cannot, (ſobbed out Alicia, overcome by the idea); no! Henry, I can never hate you !"

" Alas!

'Alas! why talk you thus, Alicia! ah! why is this misery to hang over you? why should you be commanded to do what reason and friendship will condemn! judge me not, I conjure you, by false prejudices, but by my own conduct;—by it, Alicia, allow me to sink or rise in your favour;—this is more than I can bear;—O tell me not of the possibility of my being hated by you—sufficient is it I am obliged to confine to my own breast my feelings—sufficient is it you refuse to allow me to share your griefs."

"Ah! would to heaven I had been for ever silent on this subject! ah, would that at Oakdale I had practised my early taught lesson, that there I had preserved my presence of mind, and the fortitude I was bid to aspire to; then, Henry, my doubts and fears hed rested with myself: alas! it is not her griefs, her terrors, that Alicia would have wished her dearest friend to have shared."

"Mary,

Mary, ere Alicia had finiſhed her ſpeech, came up running till ſhe was out of breath. —" I thought (ſaid the lively girl) I ſhould never have found you; I have been looking all about for you, Alicia, juſt for the expreſs purpoſe of complaining againſt Henry, who really is grown quite inſufferable. After you ſaid you would walk a little further, I went into the houſe, where I found my brother reading a very grave, tireſome book to my mother, who enquired after you; and, I ſaid, you were gone into the wood, to liſten to the nightingales. 'Mary, (ſaid this very polite gentleman,) pray ſit down and read a little, for I have letters to write this evening."

" Well, (ſaid I, in high good humour) to oblige you, Henry, I will. Where did you leave off?"

" At that ſentence, (he replied) begin there, " Morality may exiſt."

" Very well, (ſaid I, taking the volume); and if you believe me, I have read ever

ſince; only hear how hoarſe I am—my eyes ache, my head aches, my throat is ſore!"

"Pray, (ſaid Henry) does not your tongue alſo ache, Mary?"

To this queſtion ſhe replied with her uſual gaiety, and without perceiving the agitation which ſat on the countenance of her brother and Alicia.

Henry propoſed returning; "it is high time, (ſaid Alicia) it is quite duſk; I am ſure I did not obſerve it; the day has cloſed in very quickly."

"I am quite of a different way of thinking, Alicia; for my employment has been a very tedious one," (ſaid Miſs Bertram); then turning to Henry, with an added archneſs of expreſſion, ſhe enquired, in which of Shakeſpeare's comedies it was ſaid, "That time travels in divers places with divers perſons, and that with ſome people it trots, and with others ſtands ſtill."

This

This queſtion produced the deſired effect; for it diſconcerted Henry, and covered Alicia with bluſhes, of which ſhe ſcarce knew the cauſe.

The following day after this converſation had paſſed, Sir Robert and Mr. Bertram went to London, where it was found neceſſary the Baronet ſhould go to Bertram Caſtle, on account of ſome papers that were requiſite, regarding the law-ſuit, which was then expected ſhortly to be determined, as it was to be tried at York Aſſizes in July.

Sir Robert propoſed either Mary or Alicia accompanying him as far as Malieveren, which would only take him about fifteen miles out of his road to Bertram; as he had room in the chaiſe, and the whole of the family were to quit Acornbank for Malieveren, the 10th of June. Mary could not bear the idea of being left a few days alone at the Caſtle, whither Alicia inſtantly agreed to go

with the Baronet, who leaving her there, proceeded to Northumberland, where his buſineſs detained him much longer than he had expected. Lady Bertram, in the meanwhile, was confined at Acornbank, with a ſlight nervous fever, which rendered it totally unfit ſhe ſhould travel; of this Alicia was informed by Henry, who, however, ſaid, he doubted not his mother would ſoon be able to go into Yorkſhire; but ſhould that not be the caſe, before the period of which ſhe had ſpoken, as a time when all her fortitude would be neceſſary to ſupport her under the expected trial, he entreated ſhe would, if poſſible, defer it till he was near enough to aſſiſt her in any difficulty ſhe might have to ſuſtain.

Alicia, though grieved for the cauſe which had occaſioned Henry's writing to her, yet was ſoothed by the many expreſſions of attention to her happineſs his letter contained.

Alicia

Alicia felt her time paſs ſlowly and heavily away. Too much agitated for mental occupation, ſhe often ſlowly ſauntered over the park, then ſuddenly rouſing herſelf, would again quicken her pace, as if ſhe imagined exerciſe would chaſe the ideas which tormented her; for now ſcarce three weeks intervened before ſhe would be ſixteen. Thus ſome days would ſhe ſcarce ſpend an hour in the Caſtle; every riſing knoll in the wide extended park was viſited in thoſe ſolitary rambles; and as ſhe caſt her eyes over the grounds, ſo elegantly planned, ſo carefully cultivated, by the preſent worthy poſſeſſor, "What pity, (would ſhe exclaim) theſe ſhould be wreſted from Sir Robert, who ſo nobly, ſo charitably, ſo munificently ſpends the income of his eſtates, and to be ſo unjuſtly deprived of them is doubly mortifying! Henry likewiſe, the heir of the virtues, of the wealth of his father, he muſt, perhaps, reſign a large portion to an impoſtor; but wealth cannot ennoble ſuch an one, nor the want of it derogate from Henry Bertram."

Weary, liſtleſs, unoccupied, never did our heroine ſpend her time ſo little to her own ſatisfaction; ſhe could have wiſhed time annihilated, yet dreaded each day as it paſſed, when ſhe reflected it brought her ſtill nearer to the allotted time.

The ſtately apartments of Malieveren appeared gloomy and deſolate; and Alicia would linger in the gallery for hours, as if converſing with the pictures of the family, to whom for ſo many ages it had appertained; ſometimes imagining ſhe could trace a reſemblance between the features of the laſt Baron and the miſguided William March; then again ſuppoſed, it was but fancy; yet Henry Bertram was univerſally allowed by all who knew the family of Malieveren, to bear a ſtrong reſemblance to them; and ſhe was convinced the likeneſs between Henry and William, ſo oft remarked even by ſtrangers, was not ideal.

It was the middle of June, when Sir Robert called at Malieveren, in his way to Acornbank, whither he went to eſcort Lady Bertram into Yorkſhire;—he politely apologized to Alicia for having been the cauſe of her being left ſo long alone, and alſo informed her, that every thing conſpired to make him fear an unfavourable iſſue of the lawſuit; "and I ſuppoſe this place (added he) which has been ſo aſſiduouſly improved, muſt be yielded to an ungrateful impoſtor:—as I think of it, my heart ſickens—my very ſoul burns with indignation and with grief, as I behold the effect it has had upon the health of my beloved Frances. I do not (continued the Baronet, after a ſhort pauſe) often enter upon this diſtreſſing ſubject, Alicia; but I have recently learned, a very elegant houſe in York is taken, for the aſſize week, for the uſe of Lord Malieveren, who, with his pretended mother and uncle are to occupy it. I feel agitated ſtill, from the ſurpriſe I felt at learning the effrontery, the har-

dened effrontery, with which this young man purſues his villainy."

"I mourn, indeed, over his depravity, (ſaid Alicia,) yet I deem it not poſſible that at York he will dare to face the injured benefactors of his early days; I think it is but ſome trick of Ayſcough's."

"No, do not thus deceive yourſelf; William muſt have been of age ſoon after his elopement from Cambray; the ſuit is now in his name, not Ayſcough's, who, no doubt, will take care eventually to be reimburſed all his expences concerning the ſuit."

The converſation during Sir Robert's ſhort ſtay at the caſtle of Malieveren, turned upon no other ſubject; and, having dined with Alicia, bade her adieu, ſaying, he hoped the whole family would join her in leſs than a week.

Ah!

Ah! what, ere then, thought Alicia, as ſhe turned from the carriage of her worthy benefactor; ah! what, ere then, is it I have to learn? yes, ere then, muſt my mother's letter be opened; ere then ſhall I know, perhaps, what meant the ſolemn ſcene ſhe thought proper to diſcloſe.

It was Saturday, and the following Thurſday was the birth-day of Alicia; each day her agitation ſeemed to increaſe, and each day rendered her leſs able, by occupation, to divert her ideas from that ſole and overpowering one that abſorbed her very ſoul.

The long-looked-to time arrived—Alicia roſe and breakfaſted—"I will, at leaſt, (thought ſhe) preſerve an outward compoſure. Retiring, however, as ſoon as ſhe had finiſhed her ſlender meal, to her own chamber, and faſtening the door, ſhe took out the letters ſo long, ſo carefully preſerved.—Then, wrapped in the enthuſiaſm of the moment, ſhe kneeled, invoking the ſpirit of her de-

parted mother to hover over and inſpire her with reſolution; riſing, ſhe broke the ſeal with a kind of forced and unreal firmneſs in her manner, and read as follows:

" ELIZA TO HER DAUGHTER.

" Alicia, my beloved, my only child, in thee has thy ſad mother put a confidence far beyond thy years; it is, I truſt, rewarded; nor doſt thou, prompted by a childiſh curioſity, defeat the purport of this:—no, my Alicia has ſtrictly obeyed the injunctions of her dying mother, and thus ſecured to herſelf the bleſſings entailed upon dutiful children.

" The ſcene diſcloſed, when yet you were an infant in years, has not loſt its effect; it has had with my Alicia all the power, all the weight of a mother's precept—of a mother's example; and you are now no giddy trifler. Impreſſed with the importance of what ſo early was entruſted to you, ever have you walked uprightly; your mind fixed upon this important period, you have acquired patience,

ence, you have been accuſtomed to reflect, you have learned to collect yourſelf, and look with undaunted reſolution on the various ills of this mutable world; yes, or I augur wrong, if ſhe has kept my commands—yes ſuch at ſixteen is my Alicia; nor will ſhe, I truſt, ſhrink from encountering alone, (if Mr. Kirby lives not) the horrors of Oakdale Hall. In ſecret muſt you viſit it—ah! my child, there muſt you learn, what has been the cauſe of my deep, my unavailing ſorrow; and there my Alicia will find, that to diſcloſe it will cover her parent's memory with infamy—will but diſgrace herſelf. Heaven, that knows my guilt was unintentional, that has beheld my days, my nights of ſorrow, will, I truſt, not thus condemn me, as I do myſelf, and will grant to the child what was denied to the mother—fortitude and ſtrength of mind to enable her to hear that knowledge which brought me to an early grave.

"Go then, Alicia, be firm, be prudent and may Providence protect thee in the gloomy hall!"

Alicia next opened the letter which was incloſed in that Mr. Kirby had written to bid her adieu in, when he quitted England.

"MR. KIRBY TO ALICIA.

"My beloved Alicia, when you open this, you will much need my preſence; and if not returned before the period allotted by your mother, you may conclude you never will behold me again in this world; but, if alive, depend upon it, nothing ſhall have power to prevent me being with you to viſit Oakdale. Ah! would it but pleaſe God to allow me to return to you! All your fortitude may be inſufficient to ſupport you, Alicia, under the trial you are now about to undergo; for it is requiſite this viſit to Oakdale ſhould be made in ſecret, and alone.—The way from Sir Philip's chamber you well

well know, but ſhould circumſtances prevent your entering that way, another remains, though take it not, unleſs you cannot paſs by the other, as it leads through vaults and paſſages where your ſoul will ſink with terror; yet rather let theſe be dared than totally neglect the INJUNCTION you have received.

" At the north-weſt corner of the houſe, level with the ground, cloſe to the place where the large apple-tree grew, you will obſerve a ſquare ſtone, on which is a croſs deeply engraven; in the midſt of this, by cloſe attention, you will find a ſpring, which preſſed, diſcloſes a key-hole.

" In the terrace, eight inches below the ſurface, and three feet eaſt of the weſtern walnut-tree, I have buried, in a wooden box, the key which will admit you through the firſt entrance, in which you will find a key to the ſecond and third doors you will meet with.

God

"God preſerve you, Alicia, and grant you ſtrength of mind, and reſignation to his his will!

"Again, I ſay, be ſecret; your ſafety, nay, perhaps your life, depends on it."

Such was Mr. Kirby's letter, and neither it nor Mrs. Bouchier's gave Alicia the information ſhe had flattered herſelf they had contained; and at Oakdale alone was this long kept ſecret to be unfolded; and it was evident that the packet, committed in ſo ſolemn a way to her keeping, had been only meant to prove her—to teach her patience, forbearance, obedience; and that the awful ſcene ſo early diſcloſed, was to impreſs her infant mind with ideas of a magnitude then too wonderful for her comprehenſion. To the unfolding of that ſcene ſhe was bid to look forward; ſhe was commanded ſilence and fortitude; deeply was the leſſon imprinted; and her mind, her faculties, expanded in proportion as ſhe underſtood how highly ſhe had been

been intruſted. "My Alicia, (her mother ſaid) is no common child; her mind is an elevated one;" to merit this diſtinction the ſoul of Alicia ſpurned at the light and the trifling, and graſped in it the wonderful, the vaſt; ſhe pitied the wicked, ſhe aſſiſted the weak, oft comforted the afflicted, and, ſoaring towards the perfection her mother had fondly augured ſhe ſhould attain; ſhe concealed thoſe ſhining qualities, and was humble and unaſſuming: with Henry alone did ſhe allow thoſe talents fully to diſplay themſelves; for with him was ſhe in no danger of being deemed deſirous of appearing more learned or accompliſhed than ſhe really was.

CHAPTER VII.

BUT it is now time I ſhould diſcloſe to my readers, why Alicia felt a repugnance to viſit Oakdale, and alſo what it was that there in her childiſh days had been partly diſcloſed to her.

It will, doubtleſs, be remembered, that Mrs. Bouchier had cauſed Alicia to be awaked at midnight, after ſhe herſelf had a little recovered from ſome deep faintings, which had alarmed Mr. Kirby with an idea of

of her ſpeedy diſſolution; and that he, with Alicia, had accompanied her into Sir Philip's chamber; there they ſtopped, and Mrs. Bouchier ſaid to her child, "I wiſh not, Alicia, needleſsly to alarm you; had I reaſon to ſuppoſe my life would be prolonged, what I am going to diſcloſe ſhould yet have been deferred; but I now conjure you to exert that portion of fortitude, which, young as you are, I have endeavoured to inſpire you with. —I have long, my child, bid you prepare for a ſevere trial—I have told you I muſt ſoon quit this earthly manſion, and you, Alicia, muſt be reſigned to the will of the Almighty."

"I ſhall ſtrive (ſaid the weeping child) to be ſo.—Mr. Kirby ſtill will be left, and I ſhall think you, my dear mother, will be in heaven, with my father, and will watch over your Alicia."

"God (ſaid Mrs. Bouchier) will, by his care of you, ſupply the loſs of your parents, if you obey his commands; and he will give you,

you, Alicia, ſtrength of mind to bear what it is neceſſary you ſhould learn, and will enable you to ſupport what I have ſunk beneath.

" Strange events preceded your birth; long, dark, and intricate is the chain which you will hereafter, I truſt, unravel.

" I ſhall leave you without one friend in the world, ſave Mr. Kirby; I ſhall leave you, Alicia, without fortune or inheritance; a long train of evil deeds, of late repentance, the gloomy chambers I ſhall diſcloſe to you have witneſſed. The guilty ſcenes, acted in this now almoſt-deſolated hall, have transferred property, of right your's, to thoſe who are not the legal heirs; and though in theſe chambers exiſts full proof of your right, yet, alas! ſo complicated is the whole, you muſt not aſſert your claim. The reaſon why is moſt horrible to my recollection—as yet you are too young to bear the whole. But I am about to diſcloſe a ſcene, ſufficiently awful to imprint on your young mind a ſenſe of the importance

portance of what hereafter you muſt learn; at a period when your mind, I truſt, will have gained fortitude to enable you to bear it, and prudence to conceal it. I might, it is true, commit certain papers, now, to your charge, but theſe, from your extreme youth, are too important a truſt:—Mr. Kirby will repeat to you, at ſtated times, what I have ſaid now.

"Art thou now, Alicia, prepared for beholding a ſcene that will thrill thy young veins with horror?"

The amiable child aſſured her mother ſhe would not be alarmed, whilſt ſhe and Mr. Kirby were ſo near her.

Mrs. Bouchier then directed Mr. Kirby to open the door of a cloſet, apparently hollowed out of the wall, the boards that formed the floor of which drew out in one part; beneath thoſe boards that remained was a ſpring concealed; this being preſſed, the back of

of the cloſet ſunk down, till its top became level with the bottom, and diſcloſed, to the aſtoniſhment of Mr. Kirby and Alicia, a very ſmall chamber, perfectly dark, except what light iſſued through the opening; the whole furniture it contained was one ſtool and a table, with a bed, round which the curtains were cloſed. Theſe were undrawn by Mr. Kirby; on the pillow (which, as well as the covering of the bed, was black) ſtood a human ſkull and an hour-glaſs, and ſuſpended from the teſter, by a ſlender thread, hung a bloody knife.

"What (ſaid Alicia) means this? the floor, the walls are ſprinkled with blood!"

"Aſk not queſtions, my child, (ſaid Mrs. Bouchier) they muſt not be reſolved at preſent; hereafter all ſhall be explained; behold, remember, but be ſilent."

Mrs. Bouchier now opened a door which led from this chamber to a ſtair-caſe, ſo narrow,

row, it was with difficulty Mr. Kirby could walk, ſo as to aſſiſt Mrs. Bouchier with his arm in aſcending to an apartment much of the ſame ſize with that they had quitted.—This was not, like the former one, dark; for it was lighted by ſeveral chinks, rather than windows, which conſiſted each of one narrow pane, almoſt equal with the roof, which was very lofty; in this apartment Alicia remembered ſeeing nothing but a large oak cheſt; to which her mother pointing, bade her carefully remark it.

Mrs. Bouchier pauſed, ſighed deeply, and proceeded; "In this, Alicia, (ſaid ſhe) is contained, what it is requiſite you muſt learn; but Reaſon muſt be more matured, ere the ſtrange, the dreadful ſecrets, that here are concealed, ſhall be unfolded to you. Were you now, my child, to be informed, Reaſon might be frightened from her infant ſeat; your young mind cannot fully comprehend the horrid import, the dreadful tenor of thoſe

thoſe crimes which have deprived you of your parents—of your legal inheritance, and cut you off from all hopes of your birth-right."

Alicia would have ſpoken, but was awed by the air of ſolemn command with which her mother ſpoke, and ſhe remembered, beheld, and was ſilent.

Mrs. Bouchier, leaning on Mr. Kirby, again led the way to Alicia down the narrow ſtaircaſe, paſſing the door of the blood-ſtained chamber, till ſhe unclоſed the door of an apartment which was below it. This room was hung round with paintings; one ſhewed a handſome youth ſeated on the floor; his countenance ſhewed evident marks of ſurpriſe and admiration; before him ſtood a lady, whoſe looks were bent upon him with a mixture of expreſſion that was moſt admirably delineated; haughtineſs and malice appeared to ſtruggle with ſome gentler feelings,

and to check the pity that ſeemed to rend her heart, and a kind of an anguiſhed-feeling of remorſe appeared to intrude.—The perſon of this figure was tall and majeſtic; ſhe appeared turned of forty; by her ſtood another perſon, a woman about half the age of the other; ſhe it was evidently whoſe appearance had ſurpriſed the handſome youth, whoſe eyes were fixed upon her; ſhe alſo was handſome; to judge her character by her countenance, ſhe had talents and addreſs; yet ſhe had, as well as the youth, a kind of reſemblance to the haughty dame, which might lead the beholders to ſuppoſe they conſtituted one family.

The reſt of the paintings were compoſed alſo from other ſcenes, intereſting, doubtleſs to the painter—In all were ſeen the youth and younger lady; but this I have deſcribed, from the ſtrong expreſſion and the ſize of the piece, moſt attracted the attention of our young heroine, who again had to reſtrain herſelf, and behold in ſilence.

This

This apartment was unenlightened, ſave by the tapers held by Mr. Kirby and Alicia who quitted this room for another beneath it; or rather, it was a vault into which they now entered, for its roof was level with the foundation of the hall. This place diſcloſed to the wonder-ſtruck Alicia a gloomy ſcene of horror.—It was hung round with black cloth, on which, in large letters, with white worſted, was marked the following inſcription:

"Let not the gay, the giddy, or the vain, enter here;—this is the houſe of mourning the houſe of death, for here ſhall the moſt wretched being upon earth end her miſerable exiſtence; here ſhall her unhallowed remains moulder into duſt; nor ſhall, for her, be poured out the pious prayer; unworthy of the comforts which religion beſtows, her life is doomed to deſpair. Shall a murderer dare preſume to hope!—can a late repentance atone for the innocent blood ſpilled! ah! it cries aloud to heaven for vengeance; nor has it pleaded in vain; its voice was heard, and a dread-

a dreadful retribution has been required; the family will be extinct, the curſe of the Almighty reſts upon me and them; child after child has been rent from the weeping parents, yet I am the cauſe; I was the inſtigation, the perpetrator of thoſe dreadful deeds. Vain, proud, and ambitious, I ſuppoſed I could place myſelf beyond the reach of misfortune; I imagined I was to be the idol to whom all hearts ſhould bow; the moſt diabolical paſſions inflamed my heart, and reigned there triumphant; revenge was the ſole object I aſpired to—I obtained it, and was miſerable; yet that is a poor expreſſion to my preſent tortures—I was miſerable; compare miſery with happineſs; how vaſt the diſparity—ſo vaſt, ſo awfully diſtant is common miſery to the continued horrors I feel.

" Have then the gay, the giddy, or the vain entered?—have they witneſſed this gloomy ſcene of terror?—do they tremble as they read?—do they reſolve to walk uprightly?—do they reflect a ſingle falſe ſtep, if not inſtantly regained, may lead to crimes

black as are mine? go then, nor proudly fancy yourſelves ſecure as I did; and ſay to evil, Though I liſten for awhile, yet will I quickly abandon thee."

This was read ſlowly and diſtinctly by Mrs. Bouchier; which done, ſhe turned towards a raiſed bier, in the midſt of the vault, on which reſted a coffin; over it was thrown a pall of black velvet, richly embroidered with various emblematical figures that reached to the ground. On the top of the coffin was ſeated the figure of an infant (for ſuch only it was, Alicia afterwards ſuppoſed, although when firſt beheld by her, it wore the reſemblance of life to her young ideas); the face of this infant-form bore a ſtriking likeneſs to thoſe ſeen by her in the paintings in the room above; in the hand of it was held a ſcroll, on which was written: "At the throne of God, who is alone able to avenge, as he alone knows the extent of thy crimes, ſhall I plead againſt thee, thou inhuman wretch!—juſtice is poured out upon thee—on earth no more

ſhalt

ſhalt thou reſt—ſleep ſhall be baniſhed from thee—no conſecrated ground ſhall cover thy abhorred remains—and where thy crimes have been committed, there ſhall thy guilty and diſembodied ſpirit hover, till in ſome degree they are atoned for."

" As yet, (ſaid Mrs. Bouchier, with a ſolemnity of manner, to which her clear, harmonious, and deep-toned voice, gave additional power), as yet, Alicia, you can ſcarce underſtand the full extent of what it is I require of you. You are ignorant of the nature of an oath, ſuch as I am about to exact from you, although I have endeavoured to make you ſenſible of the importance of a ſolemn promiſe; and you know, to break a *Parent's Injunction*, is to err againſt the commands of God himſelf."

' I do (ſaid Alicia) know this; I know I am bound to honour my parents by a poſitive command, even if I did not love them.'

" Though almoſt an infant in point of age, you are, Alicia, deeply entruſted. I have

dared to reveal to you ſcenes, girls twice your age would have ſhrunk from beholding; but I repeat, my Alicia is no common child—her ſoul is an elevated one—her underſtanding far beyond her years; yes, thus I think of you, at this early period, Alicia; and to the end you ſhould attain that fortitude of character, that ſtrength of mind, in which I have been ſo deficient, but which you are ſo well qualified by nature to acquire, it is that I thus entruſt your tender age with a ſecret of ſuch importance. I have ſaid, ſtrange events preceded your birth; you are, like your ſad mother, the child of myſtery and misfortune. Alas! Alicia, I have nought beſides to bequeath; a ſad inheritance is your's; you are called upon in no common way; it is indiſpenſibly neceſſary you ſhould exert yourſelf: I give you, Alicia, a period to look forward to; till that period, you muſt reſt ſatisfied, without knowing the ſad tale connected with what I have diſcloſed to you; till you are ſixteen you muſt not open the packet I ſhall give into your keeping; then have you my per-

permiſſion to learn all I have in my power to communicate regarding thoſe ſtrange ſights you have beheld; and you will then know how they are connected with yourſelf. In the large oak cheſt in the higheſt apartment, you will find the dreadful explanation; the key of the cheſt is faſtened beneath this pall; dare you now, Alicia, remove it?"

She ſhrunk from the taſk enjoined,—and Mrs. Bouchier proceeded—

"I command it not now, my child; and when you do raiſe it, Alicia, I ſhall be as the mouldering tenant of the coffin it conceals. If at the age I have fixed for your viſiting theſe gloomy chambers, you have not zealouſly endeavoured to make yourſelf beloved by the merciful Being who called you into life, by piety and virtue; if you have been heedleſs of the early leſſons I have taught—if you have not ſtrove to correct evil propenſities in your heart—if you have not endeavoured to render yourſelf uſeful in the

ſtation you may be placed in—if you have not, as far as your means allowed, cultivated thoſe talents Providence has been pleaſed to beſtow—if you have not poſſeſſed them meekly, humbly, and charitably, and thus conciliated the good-will of thoſe around you, enter not here, Alicia. But you will not, you dare not; you will be ſenſible how undeſerving you are of the confidence I have repoſed, and will ſhrink from a ſight that muſt ſo forcibly remind you that oft, even in this world, vice is puniſhed, and that a period will ſhortly arrive when you ſhall be called upon to give an account of your actions to an all-ſeeing Judge. Think then, Alicia, if you preſume to open this letter till the appointed time, that your duty is forfeited, and you prove yourſelf unworthy of the truſt; dread then to enter here: but I augur differently; at ſixteen you will be all you now promiſe—all my fondeſt hopes paint to my imagination. Kneel now, my child!"—

Alicia

Alicia obeyed, and took the ſolemn oath dictated by her mother; the purport of which was, never to reveal the knowledge ſhe had of the concealed apartments, or to open the letter entruſted to her charge, till ſhe was ſixteen; then riſing, ſhe was bleſſed and embraced by her mother; and Mr. Kirby taking her in his arms, conveyed her back to her apartment, where the ſervant waited.

Already have I related the effect this ſcene had upon the mind of our heroine. Her mother's *Injunctions* had been carefully repeated to her at each viſit ſhe had made to Mr. Kirby, but of this there was little need; indelibly were they imprinted—they appeared to be interwoven in her very exiſtence—her heart had forcibly felt the ſolemn appeal—her ſenſibility, her curioſity, had equally been rouſed; the former made her dread to gratify the latter; and Alicia trembled as ſhe thought of raiſing the myſterious veil, which, as it were, concealed her even from herſelf.

She had been ſtimulated to exertions, and Alicia, as her mother augured, was at ſixteen no common character; nor will I heſitate in ſaying, ſhe would have inſtantly obeyed, when the permiſſion was granted, and have gone to Oakdale, to learn what had been ſo long hidden from her, could ſhe have done ſo; but the ſecrecy ſo conſtantly and ſtrictly enjoined, forbade this; ſituated too, in a family which ſhe had much reaſon to ſuppoſe were in ſome way concerned in the ſtrange ſights ſhe had witneſſed in the hall. With thoſe ſights her own fate was, ſhe knew, connected; ſo perhaps was ſhe alſo with the Bertrams; caution was therefore peculiarly neceſſary, as, for aught ſhe knew, the caution ſo oft enjoined might relate principally to this family.

When a child at Oakdale, ſhe had liſtened to converſations between the ſervants, that recorded ſtrange and apparently well-authenticated tales of ſpirits, who reſted not in their manſions beyond the grave, but delighted to walk,

walk at midnight their ſolitary rounds, where, when living, they had preſided, and that the gloomy chambers of the hall were often viſited by the reſtleſs and wandering ghoſts of its former inhabitants. Spite of her judgment, theſe tales had ſunk in her memory, yet had not influenced her to ſuperſtitious ideas; but ſhe had heard them when few others had been imprinted, and they were not forgotten when ſhe, with Miſs Bertram, ſlept in Sir Philip's chamber.

Alarmed by what ſhe ſaw that night, which, to her imagination, bore all the appearance of a ſpectre, (at leaſt ſuch as the idea her mind had in infancy received on the ſubject) Alicia was eaſily terrified; that ſhe was no coward, her behaviour has, in many inſtances, fully proved; but that ſhe felt, upon viewing this phantom, no ſmall degree of apprehenſion, I have already related.

At one time, the tales heard in infancy, together with the ſcroll that ſaid, "The guilty

ſpirit of ſome perſon, who in the hall, had in former time committed horrid crimes, ſhould hover near the ſpot where they were perpetrated, till, in ſome degree, they were expiated," affected her belief: again Reaſon reſumed its ſway, and ſhe ſpurned the ſuperſtitious thought;—a heavier puniſhment would be aſſigned the wicked wretch, whoſe remains mouldered unburied in thoſe gloomy apartments. It was the vicinity of thoſe horrors that had diſturbed her imagination ſo far as to conjure up this illuſion of her ſenſes; but when Miſs Bertram alſo ſaw in the glaſs the pallid face—when ſhe alſo was frightened by the horrid viſage, Alicia's ideas took another turn; in thoſe diſmal chambers ſome miſerable wretch might be condemned to linger out a wretched life—ſelf-judged, it might be a voluntary penance—or it might be a well-deſerved impriſonment. That thoſe gloomy apartments had once been thus inhabited, ſhe was already certified; but ſuch inhabitants ſure had long ceaſed to exiſt; and it was the hiſtory of their crimes, their penitence

tence, and their ſufferings ſhe was to hear, when ſhe viſited, at the appointed time, their myſterious apartments: perhaps, again, thought ſhe, ſome midnight plunderers have taken up, in this deſolate manſion, their abode, and have made thoſe concealed chambers their retreat from juſtice.

Thus, alike awed by ſuperſtition—by the dread of violence—or of encountering ſome more ſhocking ſpectacle than that which ſhe had at firſt witneſſed, though her curioſity was ſo ſtrongly ſtimulated, and though ſhe knew her mother had judged it requiſite ſhe ſhould at that period viſit Oakdale, ſo deeply had the figure which ſhe had ſeen in her laſt viſit to the hall impreſſed her with dread, augmented too by the belief ſhe entertained of the neceſſity ſhe was under not to mention her apprehenſions, that ſhe felt happy, although ſhe endeavoured to conceal from herſelf the feeling that ſhe could not with ſecrecy at preſent, viſit Oakdale; therefore ſhe was abſolved from her obligation til. ſhe could.

Alone was the viſit to be made; had this not been the caſe, Henry Bertram could have accompanied her. Alicia would not have thought of danger or difficulty;—painful, indeed, when with him, was the impoſed ſilence; it was ſecretly brooding over the idea of the figure ſhe had ſeen that ſhook her courage; could ſhe have ſpoke of it to Henry, her fears would have been leſſened, if not conquered.

In revolving over the moſt probable means of ſecretly viſiting the gloomy hall—in combating the dread ſhe entertained—in ſummoning her fortitude—in forming conjectures, though many of them wide of the truth, regarding the appearance ſhe had ſeen; Alicia ſpent the few days that intervened, between her opening the letters and the arrival of the family at Malieveren, whom ſhe received with much pleaſure, and without exhibiting any traces of the anxious interval of time ſhe had paſſed.

Lady

Lady Bertram was yet conſiderably indiſpoſed; Sir Robert was unhappy on her account, and anxious for the iſſue of the trial which was to take place in the courſe of leſs than three weeks. Miſs Bertram, though concerned for her mother's illneſs, yet abated not of her gaiety, or thought of confining herſelf in any way on that ſcore; Henry and Alicia were therefore the nurſes, the cheerful and unremitting comforters of her ladyſhip.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT the appointed time the Judges reached York. The day preceding the commencement of the aſſizes, Sir Robert Bertram and the family quitted Malieveren Caſtle for York. Lodgings had been engaged for their reception very near the houſe taken in the name of Lord Malieveren; where in the duſk of the next evening, a travelling chaiſe with four horſes ſtopped. Henry, who ſtood at the window, ſaw deſcend from it Ayſcough, who handed out a lady in mourning, whom he ſuppoſed was his ſiſter, the pretended Baroneſs. Another carriage drove up;

from it leaped a young man, who, as well as the light would allow him to judge, he thought was William; and the title of Lord Malieveren, which was heard buzzed in the crowd, as they caught it from the ſervants, aſſured him he was not miſtaken.

The following day was Sunday, but on Monday this important cauſe was expected to be heard in a city where Sir Robert Bertram was generally known, and univerſally eſteemed; yet that ſo bold an attempt could be made againſt his property and reputation, without ſome foundation, appeared too wild, too daring a ſcheme, for any one to execute; and it was but a portion of the Baronet's friends who openly declared the whole was a villainous and treacherous plot between Ayſcough and the ingrate William March: however openly theſe friends ſpoke their ſentiments, the majority declared their judgments ſhould be ſuſpended till after the trial.

Early on the day when the Judges were expected to ſit upon the Malieveren cauſe, Mr.

Mr. Bertram dreſſed, and went to court, without informing any one of his intention, in expectation of beholding William March, and with a determined reſolution to expoſtulate with him upon his ingratitude. Serjeant Ghrime, who was leading counſel for the plaintiff, opened the cauſe in a ſpeech, in which he diſplayed great oratorical powers and well-penned ſenſibility. The feelings of the auditors were deeply intereſted as he ſpoke of the beauty and amiability of Lady Malieveren, her extreme youth and inexperience!—From the Baroneſs, he paſſed to the helpleſs infancy of her ſon; then of the almoſt miraculous knowledge his uncle, Mr. Ayſcough, had obtained of him, which ſeemed as if the child had been the peculiar care of Providence. The Serjeant next ſpoke of the journey into France, and painted, in elegant terms, the reſtoration of the child to its parent, from whom he had been eſtranged ever ſince the hour of his birth!—this was a copious field;—at once did this ſkilful pleader intereſt all hearts, but thoſe obſtinately bent

bent againſt conviction, in the favour of his noble client. Amongſt the many ladies aſſembled, or rather crowded together, on this occaſion, not one dry eye was to be ſeen: nay, the learned gentleman himſelf was ſo affected by the moving picture he drew, that his handkerchief was repeatedly applied to remove the proofs of his exquiſite ſenſibility. This then was the happy climax of his ſpeech!—from this he turned the attention of the liſtening multitude to the attempt made to carry off Lord Malieveren in France.—"Scarce is it poſſible (ſaid he) to give credit to what I have witneſſes of moſt unqueſtionable veracity to vouch for!—Is it poſſible human nature could be ſo depraved—is it poſſible ſuch crimes, ſuch black, daring, diabolical iniquities could ſo long be ſheltered by a reputation otherwiſe unſpotted!—it is indeed the hand of Providence that, by a concurrence of unexpected events, has at length unmaſked villainy, and the juſtice of a Britiſh Jury will reſcue, I doubt not, the innocent

innocent from oppreſſion, and reſtore the injured Baron to his rights."

From this, Serjeant Ghrime launched out in pointed ſarcaſms, and loudly arraigned the art, the inhumanity of thoſe who had deprived ſo long the Baron of Malieveren of his right. Though this diſſertation againſt injuſtice had already laſted a very conſiderable time, it was yet unfiniſhed when Ayſcough entered the Court; it was with ſome difficulty, ſo great was the crowd, that he could reach the bar, when making a motion with his hand, the Serjeant ceaſed ſpeaking, and Ayſcough requeſted liberty to be heard, which being allowed, he began:

"My unfortunate nephew, Lord Malieveren, by whoſe arts I ſhall not inſinuate, but leave it to the deciſion of you, my Lord, and you, gentlemen of the jury; but by artifice, I doubt not, deep laid artifice, has Lord Malieveren been ſeduced away, at a criſis ſo highly important to his intereſts, at a period ſo long looked to, when your juſtice, my

my Lord, and gentlemen of the jury, ſhould reſtore to him, by means of the laws of his country, his long withheld poſſeſſions. My hopes, alas! are cloſed at the preſent juncture. Yeſterday, moſt unfortunately, I was out of town, and am juſt returned to learn, that late laſt night a perſon alighted at the door of his Lordſhip's houſe from a chaiſe. This perſon delivered a letter to Lord Malieveren, which, after having read, he incloſed to me, merely ſaying, he doubted not the urgency of the caſe would prove a ſufficient excuſe:—this done, accompanied by the bearer of the letter, he left this place.

" This letter, (Ayſcough continued) with the permiſſion of the court, I will read; allow me to premiſe, it is ſuppoſed—I ſay, my lord, *ſuppoſed*, to have been written by the daughter of Count de Marigny, whoſe unbounded attachment to Lord Malieveren is no ſecret either in this kingdom or in France.

MADE-

MADEMOISELLE DURAND TO LORD MALIEVEREN.

" Haſte, Oh! haſte, adored of my ſoul! haſte, Malieveren, to the dying Charlotte!—Ah! why did you quit her? ah! why not allow her to accompany you? She cannot ſupport the pangs of abſence! Yes, my beloved Baron, with you can Charlotte ſupport perſecution; all, every thing. But divided, ah! how far divided! ſhe ſinks, ſhe cannot ſupport it. Yes, Malieveren, thou art the ſoul of the now wretched Charlotte! but thou, inhuman as thou art, haſt quitted her; ſhe is ill, and they forbid her to write. Alas! I overheard them pronounce my doom; I ſhall not live to behold thee; I am commanded to deſiſt, but I will not till I have conjured thee by our mutual love inſtantly to return. Oh! delay it not: at leaſt I may die in your arms! that thought cheers her who ſubſcribes herſelf

" CHARLOTTE DURAND."

" Had

"Had not, (ſaid Ayſcough, as he finiſhed reading the letter) had not the ſentiments this letter contains, ſo deeply agitated Lord Malieveren, he would have ſoon perceived this is not Mademoiſelle Durand's writing; the hand I do not remember, but the ſeal is a very remarkable one, and leads to ſuſpicion."

The letter was handed by Ayſcough to ſome gentleman of the black robe, thence it reached the Jury, and, as it was handed from one to another, the whiſpers of ſurpriſe went round:—was it then poſſible? yet the ſeal ſo well known, ſo particular, ſure was that of Sir Robert Bertram. All eyes ſeemed now to fix upon Mr. Bertram, whoſe heart felt burſting as it were with indignation.

When Ayſcough took the letter, after it had been expoſed to this public inſpection, "I perceive, (ſaid he) my ſuſpicions are not ſingular, (in a kind of half whiſper)." Then, raiſing his voice, he again addreſſed the Judge, ſaying, when he found what had occurred,

occurred, during his abſence, and that his nephew had with him papers which would effectually prevent the proper proceedings from going forward, he had inſtantly come to Court to lay the caſe before the Judge. He entreated his pardon for having ſo far encroached on his time; then bowing very profoundly, and followed by his counſel, he went out, ſaying, within the hearing of Mr. Bertram, he would inſtantly go after his nephew, in hopes of overtaking, or at leaſt getting the papers, if he would not return; and flattering himſelf the cauſe might yet be heard at the preſent Aſſizes.

Ayſcough then quitted the court, as did Mr. Bertram, whoſe heart was a prey to agitations, various and violent. Shocked with the thoughtleſs depravity of his former friends, burning with reſentment againſt the cool, deliberate villain who had wrought his ruin; ſorrowing for his fall, for the grief, the vexation, the illneſs it had cauſed Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, and wondering and ſurpriſed at

at the undaunted effrontery of the unprincipled Ayſcough—theſe were a part of the ſenſations which ſwelled in the boſom of Henry; but ſo mingled did they ſeem, ſuch a confuſion of painful ideas ruſhed on him, as he liſtened to the baſe aſſertions, the falſe inſinuations, regarding his father's conduct to William March, that his mind was a chaos which permitted no regular aſſociation! Thus paſſed he along with hurried ſteps, ſcarce conſcious which way they bended. At the upper end of Carey-ſtreet he was met by Lord Morville:—"Ah! Bertram, (ſaid he) I am glad to ſee you!"

This rouſed Henry, who ſhook hands with his Lordſhip, and welcomed him on his return to England.

"I have not been (ſaid Lord Morville) a fortnight in my native country; in London I found nobody—all gone—the Earl, who did not expect me till next ſpring, was then in Derbyſhire, and I have paid my reſpects to

to him; ſo, thinking it was full time I ſhould ſee how affairs were going at Malton-park, I ſet out, and reached York laſt night, where I met with Charles Hutton, who told me about this deviliſh piece of buſineſs Sir Robert had got here about Malieveren.—William March, I hear, wants to call Lady Bertram aunt, and ſhe, it ſeems, cannot bear a tinker's brat to uſe the appellation to her."

Lord Morville had put his arm through Bertram's, and they had walked back without Henry's being conſcious whither they went, till, reaching the caſtle-gates, he ſtopped, and enquired whither they were going?

"To hear the cauſe, doubtleſs—the Malieveren cauſe!"

Henry then, in a few words, explained the ſcene he had ſo recently witneſſed, with the intention he had of ſpeaking to William, could he have ſeen him.

"What

"What, to challenge him, Harry?—if ſo, I am your ſecond."

"No, Morville, ſuch was not my intention."

"What the devil then, Harry?"

Mr. Bertram then informed his Lordſhip what were his views, and that he meant inſtantly to ſet out, and hoped to overtake William, before he could croſs the ſea, or Ayſcough join him.

Lord Morville laughed at the romantic notions of his friend; but ſwore that, if he would follow March, he would go with him, if it was to Conſtantinople.—"Do you go, Harry, to aſk leave, like a good boy, of your papa and mamma. Have you any knowledge which way this mad fellow is gone? I fear the chances are againſt us—ten to one he is flying after a favourite girl—your wiſe worſhip going to admoniſh!———" Again his Lordſhip laughed, and forgot inſtantly what he had ſaid.

"We muſt loſe no time, my Lord, (ſaid Henry); I will take chaiſe at the inn before us, and inſtantly ſet off; on you I ſhall depend for calling on Sir Robert, and giving him the reaſons for my departure."

"Upon my honour, Harry, you are wrong; I hate reaſons, and I ſhall hate to carry any ſuch meſſage. I have offered to accompany you, and ſhall like the expedition for the ſake of the frolic; and I think better of you, Bertram, than to ſuppoſe you would not do as much for me; and, (continued his Lordſhip, in a graver tone) I believe, if I know myſelf, I would do as much for a friend I eſteemed as another would."

They had reached the inn door, and Henry thanking his Lordſhip, accepted the offer he made; and, while four horſes were harneſſing for the carriage in which they were to ſet out, Mr. Bertram wrote a ſhort billet to Sir Robert, begging his excuſe for the liberty he was about to take, without his knowledge; then briefly related the cauſe of his

his journey, which, he declared, ſhould not be farther than Dover: where, if not before, he hoped to overtake William; but that, fearful his croſſing the ſeas might diſtreſs his mother, he would not attempt it. Giving this to one of the waiters, Mr. Bertram followed Lord Morville into the chaiſe, and ordered the poſtillions to drive as faſt as they could to Tadcaſter.

"Do you know, Harry, which way to direct your purſuit?"

"Towards Dover, I imagine, (replied Mr. Bertram); the carriage in which I ſuppoſe William went laſt night, came from the ſouth, and returned that road. We ſhall get intelligence as we go along."

Whilſt the ardent-ſouled Henry was faſt approaching towards Tadcaſter, his brief epiſtle reached Sir Robert ſoon after he had learned what had happened at the Caſtle, relative to the important cauſe regarding Malieveren.

Lady Bertram felt partly conſoled by the promiſe her ſon made of not quitting England; yet ſo conſcious of the artful villainy of Ayſcough, that ſhe trembled for the ſafety of Mr. Bertram, and would have wiſhed Sir Robert to purſue him. This, he told her Ladyſhip, he was convinced muſt be a fruitleſs attempt, as he had been gone a full hour;—"Lord Morville is with him alſo, therefore what ſhould we dread?"

"You know, Sir Robert, how gay, giddy, and thoughtleſs Morville was, before he went upon the continent, and I do not ſuppoſe he is much ſteadier."

"I know alſo, Lady Bertram, the generous, the noble heart of Lord Morville; that levity of character is but aſſumed; it is foreign to his ſoul: was he called upon for exertion, I dare truſt him in almoſt any ſituation."

This converſation was interrupted by the entrance of ſome of Sir Robert's friends, who had juſt quitted the Caſtle; by them he was informed of

of the letter that Ayſcough had read, with his inſinuations regarding it.

" The ſeal (ſaid Sir Charles Hutton) I was convinced was your's, Sir Robert; and though ſatisfied you neither cauſed the letter to be written, nor affixed your ſeal to it when written, I yet was certain it was your's, and took the opportunity to looſen and drop it, and afterwards ſtooped for it: here, (continued the honeſt Baronet) my good friend, it is."

" This is unaccountably ſtrange! (replied Sir Robert)—my ſeal, you ſee, exactly corre-ſponds with the impreſſion on the wax; yet ſo conſtantly is the ſeal worn by me, that was I ſurrounded by villains, of which I have not the moſt diſtant ſuſpicion, as few gentlemen have ſo good a ſet of ſervants as myſelf;—but was it ſo, no one of them could poſſibly find the means of doing this; from ſome former impreſſion, I doubt not, a ſeal has been made to ſerve this diabolical raſcal's ends! But ſure my reputation is too firmly

eſtabliſhed, to be ſhaken by the arts of this villain, which might, ere there was time for reflection, impoſe; but I muſt have been equally ſtupid, as wicked, had I affixed a ſeal ſo well known to a forgery!"

All preſent aſſented to this laſt obvious remark, and all declared they could ſuppoſe only one ſentiment could be formed on the ſubject, and that every one muſt conclude Ayſcough a villain, who had ruined William in hopes of ſharing with him the plunder of his benefactor.

A few hours after Mr. Bertram, Ayſcough alſo quitted York; with him went the pretended Baroneſs and her ſervant. The counſel retained for Lord Malieveren were all complimented with preſents by Ayſcough, as if their eloquence had gained the cauſe, and he told them, that if he could but overtake his nephew, and procure from him thoſe papers, which were ſo eſſential, one being the

the certificate of the marriage of the Baron and Baroneſs, he would return; and, if too late for being tried at York, he directed ſteps to be taken regarding its being brought forward before the Judges at Durham, to which city they next proceeded in their judicial capacity.

The witneſſes were left at York, under the care of Kilvington, whom Mr. Evans pronounced as great a raſcal as his client:—every debt contracted at York was faithfully diſcharged by Ayſcough, ere he ſet out.—Thus was Sir Robert ſtill left in uncertainty concerning the iſſue of his cauſe, which it was greatly feared would go againſt him, as witneſſes were doubtleſs procured by Ayſcough to ſwear whatever was neceſſary to prove the aſſertions he had made, againſt which Sir Robert had but little to counterbalance, except the uniform tenor of his life, which had been upright, honeſt, generous, and humane; yet where ſo large a temptation had been laid in the way, it was impoſſible

to judge of any man's heart ſo certainly, as to ſay how far he might be able to reſiſt; even the tinker's evidence, had he been able to produce it, might have been diſputed as a colluſion, for ſuch was it whiſpered amongſt the gentlemen of the law, who had fingered Ayſcough's gold; nor did they ſcruple to ſay, that Sir Robert had been the inſtrument of having Hardie tranſported, leſt he might repent of receiving a bribe, and declare himſelf perjured.

CHAPTER IX.

AT this interval Lady Bertram retired for comfort, for ſupport, where ſhe always ſought, always found it—with Alicia. Miſs Bertram's quiet was ſcarcely checked by the uneaſy ſtate of ſuſpenſe Sir Robert and Lady Bertram ſuſtained, "Oh! (would this lively and ſpirited girl exclaim) I wiſh Henry had but communicated his intentions to me! I quite envy him this jaunt; and I proteſt, Alicia, I would give the new diamond pin Sir Robert preſented me with in May to have ſeen William!—Oh! it would have been ſo

charming to have made him believe I was violently in love, and that I had run away from papa and mamma to follow him!——"

"And what then?" (enquired Alicia); for Miſs Bertram made a pauſe.

"Well then, he would think the Malieveren eſtate was his, merely for ſaying, Yes; ſo then, when he talked in raptures as long as I choſe to hear, I would burſt out a-laughing, and beg my compliments to the fair nun of Cambray, and ſo have left him, fretting and fuming moſt delightfully."

"Is that all?" again aſked Alicia, with a ſerious tone of voice.

"Not half all—I have a thouſand ſchemes of revenge; are you not ſatisfied with this one?"

"Perfectly (replied Alicia); but if I am not deceived, this unhappy young man will need no other kind of mortification, than what he is at preſent, by his conduct, preparing for his future days!"

"Mora-

" Moralizing again, Alicia! pray now can you anſwer me this queſtion—did you teach Henry, or he you? one way, I am convinced it is, and I can aſſure both you and my brother, that nothing is ſo diſagreeable. Upon my word, you and him grow ſo much alike, and ſo very unlike me, that abſolutely you ſhould be Miſs, or rather Mrs. Bertram; for I think you muſt be Henry's original half."

Miſs Bertram attained her wiſh; ſhe ſaw Alicia was diſconcerted, then inſtantly changed the ſubject into a cheerful converſation, in which ſhe made ſo many good-humoured illuſions to various matters, which intereſted her friend—ſeemed ſo ſtudious to pleaſe her, and rallied her own giddineſs with ſuch truth and ſatire, mixed with ſome ſelf-reproaches, and well-concealed praiſes of Alicia, that ſhe forgot Miſs Bertram's intended ſally of revenge, and the gay aggreſſor hoped Alicia would never remember what had paſſed.

But it is time we ſhould now purſue the travellers, who found that Lord Malieveren had changed horſes at Ferrybridge; from thence they traced him, ſtage by ſtage, till at Dartford, when they changed horſes at the poſt-houſe, he was not above two hours before them, and they did not fear being able to come up with the object of their ſearch before he reached Dover, or at leaſt before he quitted it.

They did not, however, overtake William, but learned at Dover that he had ſupped, and ſince gone to bed, as the wind was not fair for croſſing the channel.

"Your couſin has ſet an excellent example, Bertram; I hope you will not object to follow it."

"I will ſup with you, Morville, nor ſhall I wiſh to detain you; but I ſhall not go to bed till I have ſeen William March."

To

To this end Mr. Bertram wrote the following lines:

"At York, my once beloved and eſtimable friend, I hoped to have obtained an interview with you; but, ere that could be accompliſhed by me, you were gone. I have travelled from that city hither with the ſame intention, the hopes, William, of bringing you back to your only real friends; ſure you will not refuſe to ſee Henry Bertram?"

Mr. Bertram inſiſted he ſhould either be conducted to the chamber of Lord Malieveren, or that this billet ſhould be inſtantly conveyed to him. The maſter of the houſe, after ſome little heſitation, undertook to deliver the few lines of Mr. Bertram, and to bring from his Lordſhip an anſwer, which was, that, at ten o'clock the next morning, he would be happy to meet Mr. Bertram. But Henry was by no means ſatisfied with this delay, and again deſired to be ſhewn the apartment of Lord Malieveren; but this the maſter and ſervants of the houſe alike refuſed; the

the quiet of every perſon in it would be diſturbed by ſuch an interview; for the agitated appearance of Henry authorized the idea of a duel being about to take place, and in the houſe that night ſlept an Engliſh Duke and Dutcheſs, as alſo ſome French nobleman of high rank.

Mr. Bertram, finding the refuſal was perſiſted in, reſolved to wait the hour appointed, but not to go to bed; Lord Morville approved of the determination, and declared he would not quit his friend.—Supper removed, Lord Morville drank freely, and inſiſted upon Henry doing the ſame;—thoſe liberal potations and want of reſt, with the fatigue of the journey, overcame the reſolution formed by the purſuers of William March, of watching the night, for both ſlept till late in the forenoon; the waiter who ſat up to attend them, had, after placing the wine upon the table, fallen faſt aſleep, nor awoke till the ſervants, who roſe in the morning, rouſed and bid him

him go to bed, which he did, without recollecting the gueſts, to attend whom was his buſineſs.

When the maſter of the houſe, who had been engaged the firſt hours of the day with the departure of ſome of his gueſts, and the arrival of others, at length remembered he had left Lord Morville (whom he knew, though not his friend) up when he went to bed, enquired of his ſervants concerning them; but receiving no information, he opened the door of the room in which they were. This waked Mr. Bertram, who ſtarting up, to his infinite mortification ſaw the ſun ſhining through the ſhutters and curtains, and haſtily interrupted the landlord's apologies by enquiries concerning Lord Malieveren? The reply was, that he had not ſeen his Lordſhip that morning.

"He is not gone I hope," (ſaid Lord Morville).

"Not ſeen him, Sir!" (ſaid Henry).

"I was

"I was up late laſt night, and have been ſo much engaged this morning by the departure of the French Count and his ſuite, that I have been rather remiſs in my enquiries, but ſhall inſtantly make it my buſineſs."

In a few minutes they received the mortifying intelligence that Lord Malieveren had ſet out for Deal about two hours after having received Mr. Bertram's card.

Lord Morville ſwore at the Burgundy which had ſent him to ſleep; then ſaid he was ready to accompany Henry to Deal; "we ſhall cut a poor figure when we return to York, after having travelled almoſt three hundred miles to ſee this fellow, ſhould we return without our errand!"

His Lordſhip's ſpeech was interrupted by the appearance of a waiter, who brought a note to Mr. Bertram; haſtily was it broke open, and contained nearly the few following words:

"Why

"Why purſue me, Henry? I will not, cannot ſee you. I know you will reproach—you will talk of obligations, of ingratitude—but till I make my claim good to the title and eſtate of Malieveren, I ſhall hold no converſation with any part of a family, to whom, if thoſe claims are authenticated, the whole nation will know what are my obligations, how far they are entitled to my gratitude!—You, Henry, did not participate—you are ſtill dear to the heart of

"MALIEVEREN."

Upon enquiry, it was found the poſtillions who drove William to Deal were returned, and from them they learned he had croſſed, in an open boat, from thence to France, at leaſt they had ſeen him embark in one.

"Diſtanced all to nothing, Harry! (exclaimed Lord Morville;) what ſhall we do next?"

"Return

"Return (replied Mr. Bertram); for I hold myſelf bound by the promiſe I made at York to do ſo."

"What I ſhall do, you muſt determine; (ſaid Lord Morville). I will croſs the channel if you chuſe; or if you prefer Old England, go back to Yorkſhire. You find I am the moſt pliable fellow in the world, though I cannot but ſay, the laugh will go againſt us."

Henry perſiſting in his reſolution to return, a carriage was ordered immediately, and they ſet off, meeting ſoon after Ayſcough and his ſiſter; but, except this, nothing happened worth relating during a journey, in which they drove as faſt as four horſes could go, and without ſtopping to ſleep any where, and reached York, after an abſence of ſcarce five days. His Lordſhip accompanied Mr. Bertram to Sir Robert's lodgings, where they related the ill ſucceſs of their expedition. The having undertaken it at all was ſeverely reprobated by the Baronet:—"It argued, (ſaid he) Henry, a very conſiderable ſhare of vanity

vanity in you to ſuppoſe you can detach this ungrateful and miſguided young man from the connexions he has formed; you are not to learn that he poſſeſſes uncommon great abilities; he muſt with thoſe abilities add a moſt ſurpriſing ſhare of duplicity, or he could not have been able to conceal his natural evil propenſities for ſo many years as he did, under the maſk of virtue. With ſuch a character, what chance is there of reformation? Reflect then, Henry, how knight-errant an undertaking you engaged in:—the weak or the ignorant may be deceived—the truth may be explained, and they may be led to comprehend their folly; but William March comes not under this deſcription—he is, I fear, ſyſtemically wicked!"

Lady Bertram, whoſe fears for her ſon had been powerfully awakened, from the knowledge ſhe had of the arts and malice of Sir Robert's enemies, forgot to reprove in the joy ſhe felt at Henry's ſafe return.

The

The countenance of Alicia diſcloſed to Henry ſhe too had ſuffered from his abſence—ſhe too was overjoyed at his return.

No likelihood now appearing of Ayſcough's return for the cauſe to be tried any where in the northern circuit; immediately after the Judges quitted York, the family of Bertram returned to Malieveren: with them alſo went Lord Morville, as a gueſt to Sir Robert; his own houſe at Malton-park, (which was the eſtate of the late Counteſs, his mother, and to which, at the joyful period of twenty one, he had ſucceeded) being, from his unexpected return, not quite ready for his reception. Gay, lively, and good-humoured, Lord Morville, though giving way to faſhionable follies and faſhionable vices, had a heart naturally inclined to virtue;—he was generous and charitable, but it was the impulſe of the moment, not the effect of reflection;—he could not bear to refuſe, he could not bear to hear a tale of diſtreſs: with this liberality he joined, what is often, though originally meant for its companion,

panion, but generally ſeparated from it, an uprightneſs of principle;—candid and frank, he thought not of diſplaying his virtues, or concealing his faults. The underſtanding of his Lordſhip was by no means deſpicable; but he never took much trouble in its cultivation, and as yet had given himſelf no leiſure for reflection, though his mind was active.—Only lately become his own maſter, poſſeſſed of rank, health, independence, and a full flow of animal ſpirits, with a handſome and manly form—on the continent equally as in his own country, he found his company courted; and whilſt his many engaging and amiable qualities were talked of, few reflected how far his Lordſhip might, if he choſe, exceed the character he then was.

Such was the gay, good-tempered gueſt of Sir Robert Bertram, and mirth ſeemed, during his abode in it, to have taken up her reſidence at the Caſtle of Malieveren.

In

In about a fortnight Lord Morville went to reſide at his own houſe, and the health and ſpirits of Lady Bertram ſeemed to be quickly recruiting. Oft would the idea of her viſit to Oakdale preſent itſelf to the mind of Alicia!—oft ſhe wiſhed Mr. Kirby might yet return!—that hope was indeed an illuſive one, which ſunk as ſhe reflected how little probability there was for the ſuppoſition. Since he quitted England ſhe had received but two letters from him, the firſt written immediately upon his landing at New York, the ſecond giving an account of his being ready to ſet out upon his journey to his plantation, which was ſituated far beyond the regular ſettlements, and bordering upon the nations of ſavage Indians. Alas! ſmall appeared the proſpect of his return, or even of his life; for he had expreſsly declared he would, if alive, return before Alicia was ſixteen. As ſhe reflected upon the number of years that had elapſed, and the dangers to which her friend was expoſed during that time from fatigue, ſickneſs, and various cauſes, hope died away, and

deſpair ſucceeded: yet, on this ſubject Alicia thought as ſeldom as poſſible, for ſhe found how neceſſary it was ſhe ſhould rouſe herſelf, and ſuch thoughts ill qualified her for exertion.

The law-ſuit at preſent ſeemed to be dropped, as the lawyers, employed by Lord Malieveren, or rather Ayſcough, had heard nothing from either ſince they quitted York; yet Sir Robert did not ſuppoſe he was, by the preſent ſuſpenſion of operations, ſecured from the attacks of his enemies.

CHAPTER X.

AT this time Miſs Bertram, who uſed formerly to ſay, ſhe diſliked riding on horſeback, and hated to drive even a low hung curricle, was now never ſo happy as when mounted on a ſpirited hunter ſhe had begged from Sir Robert, or when driving, L'Amazon, a high phaeton belonging to Mr. Bertram; ſo quick was the metamorphoſe which vanity, love of admiration, or love itſelf wrought on Miſs Bertram, who, a few months back, would have ſcreamed with terror, while being drove by her mother, who was allowed to be a proficient

ficient in the art, yet has from the ſame happy ſtation flouriſhed her whip, and ſquared her elbows, without fearing to riſk her neck, or that of Alicia's, who generally accompanied her friend in theſe ſpirited expeditions, though fully ſatisfied of Mary's inſufficiency in the management of a pair of mettled horſes; yet Alicia would not yield to Henry's remonſtrances on the ſubject, and continued, as he ſaid, to riſk her life by his ſiſter's folly.

Alicia knew, was ſhe to declare her opinion regarding Miſs Bertram's ſkill, ſhe ſhould offend her, and alſo bring on her reproof from Lady Bertram.

Miſs Bertram, though quite a heroine in her high-raiſed car, would yet ſcream herſelf into hyſterics at the ſight of a frog; for the change, however, Alicia was at no loſs to account. Lord Morville had ſubdued Miſs Bertram's fears, had brought her to rein the mettled ſteed, and guide the lofty phaeton; for a horſe was the object of his Lordſhip's admiration,

and a woman who could manage that noble animal with addreſs, whatever beſides were her attractions, that one ranked firſt in his opinion. To merit then his Lordſhip's encomiums, Miſs Bertram threw aſide her affected fears, and ſtepped on the other ſide of them: thus inſpired, her progreſs in the noble art of horſemanſhip was wonderful, and ſo great an impreſſion had this acquirement made upon Lord Morville, that he declared one day at his own table, he would ſport Miſs Bertram, provided ſhe rode Miſs Di ——, for any ſum againſt the field, "that is, (ſaid he, in explanation) againſt any woman in the North Riding."

A hundred guineas was propoſed by Mr. Huddleſton, who named as the repreſentative of all the female jockeys in the Riding, his ſiſter Grace. The bet was accepted, and the place fixed for deciding this important affair, without theſe two hair-brained young men ever reflecting it was poſſible the ladies would neither riſk their bones, nor forfeit

forfeit their claims to the delicacy of their ſex by ſo public an exhibition.

"Miſs Bertram, (ſaid Lord William Bottereux) drives well; I met her the other morning in a phaeton, and ſhe looked divinely."

"No, hold there (cried Lord Morville); I am off upon that ſcore—ſhe is barely tolerable."

"I think, (ſaid Mr. Hutton) ſhe can only drive a pair."

"Yes, (rejoined Lord Morville) a pair ſhe may; but I ſhould laugh to ſee her with four in hand."

"That is out of the queſtion," (ſaid Lord William).

"I beg your pardon, my lord, by no means; Lady Harriet Marſden does, but I do not think Miſs Bertram ever will."

Much more was ſaid upon this intereſting topic, for ſuch it doubtleſs was to this jovial party that day aſſembled at Lord Morville's;

but I only repeat that part which reached Miſs Bertram's ears, through the medium of her woman, who herſelf had it from his Lordſhip's valet.

"I will drive four, (thought Mary) his wiſe Lordſhip ſhall ſee, though he had the aſſurance to ſay I never would, intolerable creature!"

A few days following this converſation, the Earl of Knareſborough came to Malton-park, upon a viſit to his ſon, accompanied by his other child, Lady Auguſta Morville, who had till this ſummer entirely reſided with the dowager Counteſs of Wolverhampton, ſiſter to the Earl.

Lady Auguſta was almoſt an infant at her mother's death, upon which event her aunt had taken charge of her. The Counteſs was a widow before her niece arrived at the age of ten, and had reſided ſince that period chiefly at her jointure houſe, in Staffordſhire.

Alicia

Alicia had ſeen her in London the preceding ſpring, upon ſome occaſional viſits; nor did Miſs Bertram know much more of her.—Henry was, however, better acquainted with Lady Auguſta; for he had with the Earl, Sir Robert, and the miſguided William March, accompanied Lord Morville in the farewel viſit he made the Counteſs and his ſiſter previous to his going upon the continent.

Mr. Bertram was warm in his praiſes of Lady Auguſta; "you will in her, Alicia, (ſaid he) meet with your kindred mind; ſhe is all accompliſhed, all amiable; but you muſt yourſelf judge; I ought not to impart my opinion till you have made ſome deciſion."

Lady Bertram was confined by a cold, but declared her wiſh that Mary and Alicia ſhould call upon Lady Auguſta at the park.

"I will ride over," (ſaid Miſs Bertram, with a careleſs air).

"In the coach, Mary, then, (replied her Ladyſhip); I have no idea you ſhould make your viſit to Lady Auguſta on horſeback, like the daughter of one of the farmers;—learn to reſpect yourſelf, and alſo learn what is due to others."

"Oh! horrid, Lady Bertram, in the coach! why it is hot as if it was ſtill July. Heavens! why ſhould I be cooped up in that naſty cloſe carriage? I ſhall not viſit her Ladyſhip on ſuch terms; I am ſure I ſhall look ten times better on my beautiful horſe than in that great coach."

Miſs Bertram had her plans—it was not on horſeback, but in the phaeton, ſhe wiſhed to go to the Park; ſhe knew her mother's attachment to ceremonies, now wearing faſt out of date, and knew ſhe would compound with her upon her own terms, if ſhe gave up the ſcheme of viſiting in a way Lady Bertram thought derogatory to her dignity.

The

The phaeton was propoſed by her Ladyſhip, with the proviſo of Henry's driving; but now Miſs Bertram made objections to a ſingle pair of horſes, and at length it was ſettled the phaeton with four horſes was to be drove by Mr. Bertram. Whilſt he was ſpeaking to one of the ſervants, Miſs Bertram got in, placed herſelf in the driving ſeat, and took the reins. Henry begged ſhe would reſign them.

"Only, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) allow me to drive to the Lodge; I will give you the reins when we reach the turnpike. You ſhall ſee how cautious I will be."

Finding his ſiſter would not ſubmit to be diſpoſſeſſed, without his inſiſting upon it in a way he did not chuſe to do before the ſervants, he ſuffered her to keep the ſeat ſhe had taken, eſpecially as the road acroſs the park was ſuch as not to admit of fears.—Alicia entreated Miſs Bertram to reſign the reins to her brother.

" And ſo, my ſweet girl, you think (ſaid Mary) it will be pleaſanter to have your bones broke by Henry than by me; but look how careful, how exact I am; truſt me, Alicia, you are in no danger."

Miſs Bertram had indeed drove very ſlow acroſs the park.

" Come, Mary, (ſaid Henry) we are cloſe to the Lodge, reſign your poſt."

" No, not yet; I wiſh to let you ſee how neatly I will take the gate; I will lay any ſum Morville could not do it better."

No ſooner had they paſſed the Lodge of Malieveren-park, than ſhe, with much addreſs, whipped the leaders, and ſet off full ſpeed. To conteſt the matter, Mr. Bertram feared would be more dangerous than to ſuffer this uncontroulable girl to have her own way; —ſafely they had almoſt reached the Lodge gate, (which opened from the turnpike to Malton-park) acroſs which Miſs Bertram hoped

hoped to flouriſh, contrary to Lord Morville's inſinuations, that ſhe never would drive four in hand:—full of this idea, elated by her ſucceſs, ſhe allowed not ſufficient room in the turn ſhe made from the road, and the front wheels came with ſuch violence againſt the ſtone pillars of the gate, that ſhe and Alicia were thrown over the heads of the firſt pair of horſes by the ſhock. The carriage from its poſition filled the gateway; Henry ſtopped not to deliberate, but with one bold and active leap cleared the carriage, and cutting the traces of the leaders, dragged out the ladies from amongſt the feet of the remaining pair of horſes: meanwhile, by going over the wall, the two ſervants had come to his aſſiſtance. Both ladies appeared to be greatly hurt; both lay bleeding and fainting; the carriage was drawn back to allow a paſſage, and Miſs Bertram and Alicia were conveyed into the houſe at the Lodge. One ſervant was diſpatched to Middleham for a ſurgeon, whilſt the other went to Malieveren in order

to bring the coach and Mrs. Rowley, the houſekeeper.

Henry, alive to the danger of his ſiſter and Alicia, loſt no time in fruitleſs lamentations, but gave at firſt his orders with calmneſs. Miſs Bertram ſoon after being laid upon a bed, recovered from her fainting, but Alicia ſtill lay inſenſible; no ſooner did Mary become poſſeſſed of her recollection, and ſaw her friend lay pale, ſenſeleſs, and bleeding, than ſhe ſent out a loud agonizing ſcream, and throwing herſelf again upon the bed, gave way to tears and accuſations againſt her own folly:—Oh! ſhe had killed, murdered her dear, her beloved Alicia, but ſhe could not, would not, ſurvive her!—A very violent hyſteric ſucceeded theſe expreſſions of grief and ſelf-reproach.

Miſs Bertram was taken out of the apartment, and Henry deſpairing of ever again beholding life reviſit the pale form before him, kneeled by the bedſide with one of the

cold hands of Alicia preſſed to his lips, and gave himſelf up to grief, though not ſo loud as that of his ſiſter, yet infinitely more painful. The lifeleſs hand of Alicia was bedewed with his tears; Henry ſeemed almoſt convulſed by his feelings, which he vainly ſtrove to conceal. In leſs than half an hour the ſervant returned with Mr. Hoſkins from Middleham, having met him at a conſiderable diſtance from the town.

As he entered, Henry ſtarted up;—"Oh! ſpeak, tell me does ſhe live! but tell me not, Oh! I conjure you, tell me not ſhe has ceaſed to exiſt!"

"Are you frantic, Mr. Bertram? (ſaid the ſurgeon); Miſs Leigh does live, but it is neceſſary you ſhould go out; I muſt have other aſſiſtants."

"O merciful Father! (exclaimed the miſerable Henry, throwing himſelf again by the bedſide) reſtore Alicia to me, or take this wretched being;—I will not leave her—you ſhall not force me hence!"

Henry was indeed incapable of liſtening to reaſon, and it was the united force of three people that removed him.

It was not till various applications had been tried by Mr. Hoſkins, aſſiſted by the woman of the houſe, that Alicia again opened her eyes, and it was ſome time after that he found her ſhoulder was diſlocated; but ſhe ſeemed unable to inform him what other hurts ſhe had received; and he felt greatly alarmed by the ſtate of ſtupefaction ſhe appeared to be in, having ſcarce opened her eyes before ſhe fell aſleep again; that ſhe lived was, however, ſome conſolation to Miſs Bertram, as well as her brother, who again endeavoured to compoſe himſelf. Miſs Bertram had ſome ſlight bruiſes, and her face was ſcratched conſiderably.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. Hoſkins, Sir Robert with Mrs. Rowley in the coach reached Malton-park Lodge; the news had been communicated to Lord Morville, as he

was

was paſſing the gate, who alighted juſt as Mr. Hoſkins was declaring to Sir Robert he feared a fracture in the head had been the conſequence of Miſs Sleigh's fall, and wiſhed ſome other ſurgeon to be called, that a conſultation might be inſtantly held, and named two people of eminence in the profeſſion, one at York, and the other at Newcaſtle.

Lord Morville, with his natural goodneſs of heart, ſympathized in the diſtreſs he witneſſed:—"Henry is unfit to go, (ſaid he to the Baronet) from the fright and anxiety he feels; allow me, therefore, to be the courier to Newcaſtle; I will inſtantly mount, nor ſtop till I reach it, whilſt a ſervant ſhall follow to order the chaiſe for my return with the ſurgeon, which I pledge myſelf ſhall be as ſoon as the perſon ſent for from York can arrive, although it is not half the length of way."

Henry conteſted this point with Lord Morville, who would not yield his prior claim; the

eyes, the heart of Miſs Bertram declared how deeply ſhe felt the generous offer, which determined him to perſiſt; by this regulation alſo her brother would be able to ſtay and watch over Alicia. His Lordſhip's intereſt in this affair was the higheſt obligation he could beſtow on Mr. Bertram.

Lord Morville, after giving directions to his ſervant concerning the relays he was to order, and bidding him follow with all expedition, leaped upon his horſe, and gallopped off.

Mr. Hoſkins then ordered Miſs Bertram to return to Malieveren, as reſt and ſome application was neceſſary for the ſcratches and bruiſes ſhe had received;—reluctantly ſhe yielded, and was accompanied to the Caſtle by Sir Robert, who in the moſt favourable way informed Lady Bertram of what had happened to her favourite. Her Ladyſhip inſtantly went to the Lodge, where ſhe found

Alicia

Alicia ſtill aſleep—Mrs. Rowley ſeated on one ſide, Henry and the ſurgeon on the other.

" This is by no means prudent, my Lady (ſaid Mr. Hoſkins); you may depend upon my care; Mrs. Rowley too is better calculated than you are for a nurſe to Miſs Sleigh. I entreat, nay I inſiſt, upon your returning to the Caſtle; my patient ſhall be taken thither, as ſoon as poſſible—remember your late illneſs, your preſent indiſpoſition: you muſt not trifle with your health—as a profeſſional man, I ought to have authority."

To that authority Lady Bertram yielded, and ſaid ſhe would ſend the coach back, and thought Miſs Sleigh might be taken in it upon the bed ſhe now laid.

" I will ſend for the coach when we need it," (replied Mr. Hoſkins.)

Again all was ſtill!—Fearing, hoping, racked with ſuſpenſe, Henry watched the heavy,

heavy, death-like ſleep of Alicia. Towards night ſhe waked, but her head ſeemed quite light, and in a few minutes again ſlept;—about midnight the ſurgeon arrived from York, who agreed with Mr. Hoſkins in his fears. Soon after Alicia waked tolerably compoſed, though without a recollection of the paſt; ſhe enquired of Henry, who was kneeling by her, why he was there, and where ſhe was? In a few words he informed her, and ſaid Mr. Hoſkins, and another gentleman of the faculty were in the room.

Upon Mr. Hoſkins enquiring how ſhe felt herſelf, ſhe replied in great pain; but in anſwer to the enquiries concerning her head, ſhe made no particular complaint. Henry now went into the outer room, cheered by the idea her head could not be ſo very conſiderably injured.

Alicia's hand, which had been deeply cut, had at firſt been dreſſed, but ſhe was ſeverely bruiſed in various parts, beſides her ſhoulder being

being diſlocated; immediate applications were made to reduce the ſwelling; her hair was alſo cut off from thoſe parts of her head where a fracture was ſuppoſed likely. By this time Lord Morville, with the ſurgeon from Newcaſtle, arrived: to his Lordſhip Henry could not ſay much, yet what he did ſay, was ſufficient to aſſure him, that in ſuch a heart as Mr. Bertram's the obligation could never be effaced.

The gentlemen of the faculty now held a conſultation, in which they agreed Miſs Sleigh had better be removed to the Caſtle, before her ſhoulder was reduced; and it was hoped no fracture had taken place on her head; but upon this they could not all agree.

Frequent meſſages had paſſed between the Caſtle and Malton-park Lodge; Sir Robert had been there himſelf; by the laſt meſſenger, a ſummons was ſent for the coach, into which Miſs Sleigh was put, ſupported by pillows, and attended by Mrs. Rowley,

Rowley, Mr. Hoſkins, and Henry. The motion of the carriage renewed the faintings of Alicia. Lady Bertram was up, and ready to receive her; after a little reſt, Alicia declared ſhe was able to undergo any operation. The ſurgeons then (though not without much difficulty, ariſing from the ſwelling) got her ſhoulder reſtored to its proper poſition; an operation in which ſhe ſuſtained much pain, but bore it with a fortitude which aſtoniſhed the three ſurgeons, who agreed to wait a few days, to aſcertain whether her ſcull was damaged or not.

A violent fever quickly came on, and threatened the life of their patient. Phyſicians now ſucceeded the ſurgical gentlemen; Lady Bertram inſiſted upon acting as nurſe to her beloved Alicia; but this was equally forbade by the doctors and Sir Robert, her yet weak ſtate of health rendering every care neceſſary:—ſhe therefore at length ſubmitted to go to Malton-park, as whilſt ſhe ſtaid at the Caſtle, no precautions could prevent

vent her viſiting Alicia. Miſs Bertram alſo went with her Ladyſhip, by command of the doctors, whoſe tears and lamentations, when ſhe was ſenſible of what ſhe heard, diſturbed Alicia.

Sir Robert divided his time between the Caſtle and Malton-park; whilſt Henry's whole time was ſpent in the chamber adjoining Alicia's, to gaze on whom he oft ſtole into the apartment in which ſhe lay. Her altered countenance fluſhed with fever, her eyes, wild with delirium, or glazed with ſtupor, ſometimes fixed upon him, though unconſcious of his preſence, drove him at times to the brink of diſtraction. Vain was every endeavour to remove Mr. Bertram from this ſad ſight; whilſt Alicia lived, he ſolemnly declared to Sir Robert, no act, no force, or entreaty ſhould make him exiſt in any other place than the room he choſe to occupy.

The delirious fancy of Alicia oft portrayed the blood-ſtained chamber, and all the horrors

horrors of Oakdale :—now ſhe trembled, now ſcreamed with horror; but the ſtrange and myſterious expreſſions which eſcaped her, paſſed unnoticed by her attendants, otherwiſe than as indicating her fever was higher. The preſence of Henry, though ſhe was ſeemingly unconſcious of it, ſtill poſſeſſed a power over Alicia nothing elſe did; as all medicine was refuſed by her which he did not adminiſter.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the ninth day, the phyſicians ſcarce entertained any hope of Alicia's recovery; and once more Sir Robert entreated his ſon to quit Malieveren; but not ſucceeding in that point, he changed his apartment to one nearer that occupied by Mr. Bertram, who had promiſed he would not that night enter Alicia's room.

Sleep had, during the period of our heroine's illneſs, been baniſhed from the eyes of Henry, and he ſat anxiouſly liſtening to what paſſed

paſſed in her room: he imagined ſhe was worſe; ſteps were heard paſſing along the gallery, which he knew to be Doctor Dealtry, who he ſuppoſed had been called up (as he ſtaid that night at the Caſtle); the ſound of voices, and a kind of buſtle ſucceeded. After an interval of a few minutes, Henry felt ſtill more cruelly alarmed by the calm ſilence which reigned; all was ſtill; his heart throbbed with terror, its vibrations were quick, and as he liſtened, ſeemed as if audible; this horrible ſilence ſhook every nerve of Henry, pervaded every ſenſe—it was agony too keen to ſupport:—Alicia was dead. He roſe, and with a few haſty ſteps was at the bed-ſide of his father.

"Oh! (he exclaimed, throwing himſelf on the floor) it is done—it is finiſhed;—Alicia, my beloved, my adored Alicia is now a ſaint in heaven!—Ah! ſhe is gone;—ſhe never knew I loved her!—Look not then to me, my father, for the ſupport of your old age;—look not to me as the heir of your lands;

lands; I too may be conſidered as ſhe is.—I cannot ſupport this wretched being!"

Henry ceaſed to ſpeak: overcome by watchings, by continual grief and agitation, he ſunk lifeleſs at the feet of his father, who calling for aſſiſtance, he was recovered from the fainting, undreſſed, and put into bed:—ſome medicine was alſo adminiſtered, to whoſe power grief itſelf ſubmitted; for Henry ſlept.

Sir Robert, who doubted not the truth of the information he had received, now enquired at what time Alicia had expired; when, to his infinite ſurpriſe and joy, he learned ſhe was then enjoying the moſt quiet ſleep ſhe had taken ſince the commencement of her fever. From this ſhe awaked conſiderably better; and Doctor Dealtry, before he quitted Malieveren, at noon, declared he entertained lively hopes of his patient's recovery.

This

This was the news which ſaluted Henry upon his riſing; but it was accompanied by a poſitive injunction from both the phyſicians, that he was on no account to be allowed to enter her room. It was with difficulty he was brought to believe the tidings; nor would he ſubmit to the reſtriction enjoined, till, by looking on Alicia as ſhe ſlept, he convinced himſelf he was not deceived.

Three days after this, Lady Bertram and Mary returned to the Caſtle. The following day they were allowed to behold Alicia; ſhe was then able to ſit up a ſhort time, and her recovery had ſo far been rapid. Miſs Bertram's expreſſions, though ſhe had promiſed to controul them, agitated Alicia greatly; therefore it was thought adviſeable her interview with Henry ſhould be deferred a few days longer.—This period arrived, and he entered the apartment, where ſo lately he had liſtened to the wild effuſions of Alicia's delirium—where he had heard her invoke his name, as ſhe declared how dear he was

to

to her heart;—in this apartment too he had given way to all the frenzy of grief.—Now the words died upon his lips, which were as pale as aſhes; ſcarce could he attain articulation; and then it ſeemed not the ardent, the tender Henry who ſpoke. His expreſſions appeared cold and lifeleſs, as formally he ſaluted that hand, which a few days ago he wept over in agony.

"I fear, (ſaid Alicia, with an enquiring air) I fear you are alſo unwell, Mr. Bertram, you look ſo pale."—Her eyes were fixed upon him as ſhe ſpake; and the intereſt, the tenderneſs they declared, now ſoftened by the langour of ſickneſs, almoſt overcame him. Scarce could he command himſelf—ſcarce reſtrain the impulſe he felt;—he could have fallen at her feet—he could have poured out the various emotions of his ſoul. But this was not to be; at preſent he thought it neceſſary to conceal them; yet, as they glowed at his heart, flushed even his countenance, and roſe to his eyes, he found it a moſt painful taſk to perform.

The converſation between Henry and Alicia was ſhort; and when he quitted her, he felt a ſad weight hang about his heart. Henry was ill, nor was ſhe any longer eſteemed by him.—Alas! ſhe had loſt his friendſhip;—if ſo, on whom could ſhe rely—to whom look for ſupport?—Sadly this idea ſat upon the ſpirits of Alicia, and brought back a ſlight return of her fever; but as ſhe liſtened to accounts of his tender, his ſolicitous enquiries, ſhe could not, ſhe did not fear that ſhe had loſt her uſual place in the heart of Henry Bertram;—and Alicia hoped, fondly hoped, that yet ſhe was dear to him—that yet he loved her as a ſiſter. Such were the ſentiments with which, as ſhe recovered, ſhe again met him.—Now leſs agitated, Henry expreſſed himſelf with leſs reſtraint, and this every ſucceeding interview leſſened.

Alicia was able to go out in a carriage ſooner than could have been expected. Lady Bertram was now her conſtant companion; nor

nor was the lively Mary deficient in attentions to her friend.

Henry ſpent almoſt his whole time in contributing to Alicia's amuſement; who no longer doubted his friendſhip, as ſhe marked the unremitting intereſt he took in whatever regarded her.

Lady Auguſta Morville had, during the convaleſcence of our heroine, made frequent viſits at Malieveren; and, as ſoon as it was judged prudent for her to go ſo far, ſhe went to Malton-park; Miſs Bertram and Henry accompanying her.—Alicia ſaw, or imagined ſhe ſaw, a kind of agitation in Lady Auguſta's countenance, as ſhe addreſſed Henry, and in his own, embarraſſment, very unlike his uſual addreſs;—ſhe had ſeen them together before, but then had not remarked it.

As they returned, Mr. Bertram ſat with his arms folded, and ſeemed loſt in a deep

reverie;—he appeared to have forgot any perſon was by him who claimed his attention. Miſs Bertram would not have ſuffered him to be thus engroſſed, had ſhe not been occupied with ſomething that alſo intereſted her, and ſat with her head out of the coach-window for a conſiderable time; at laſt ſuddenly drawing back, ſhe pulled her hat over her eyes, croſſed her arms, and ſighing dreadfully, ſaid, "Pray look, my ſweet brother; this is juſt you.—Heigho! was ever ſon of Knight ſo woe begone—ſo dolorous." Then changing her poſition, ſhe aſſumed that of Alicia, which was alſo in the *penſeroſo* ſtyle:—"What a ſweet couple you are—I am charmed by your entertaining converſation!"

"I am happy to find, Mary, you are reſtored to your uſual ſpirits; for I think of late they appear to have evaporated."

At this moment Lord Morville rode up, and congratulated Alicia on her recovery.

"And

" And pray, my Lord, congratulate Miſs Bertram alſo," ſaid Henry.

" As how, Henry ?"

" On the recovery of her gaiety. She was quite dull till we reached the park, the air of which has had a moſt charming effect."

" Who, I, Brother ?—I in ſpirits—I gay ? Never, my Lord, had I ſuch a diſagreeable ride in my life.—I am ſo grave—ſo ſedate—it is aſtoniſhing."

" Will you give me a corner in the carriage ? and I will try if ſuch good, ſober, ſedate people will work a reformation upon me."

His Lordſhip, being anſwered in the affirmative reſpecting the corner, alighting, gave his horſe to his ſervant, and entered the coach.

" I have juſt parted with the Earl, who has been ſo obliging as to give me a detail of my faults, which has laſted about an hour and a half:—I am too gay, too inconſi-

derate; but I have almoſt forgot what were the mighty crimes.—No, no, that is too bad, not crimes—his Lordſhip did not go that far—he was ſo polite as merely to call them foibles; but propheſied, if I remember truly, that if I did not ſtop, I ſhould become—nay, I cannot ſhock you by ſaying what a terrible fellow I ſhould be. But the very cream of the jeſt, the winding up of the whole, was a recipe his Lordſhip propoſed for my cure."

"Pray (ſaid Miſs Bertram), if the Earl has not got a patent for it, do inform us what are the ingredients."

"The ingredients his Lordſhip has not diſcloſed; but I can tell you the title of the medicine, which I think perfectly ſufficient, without enquiring what particulars it is to conſiſt of—Matrimony was the cure the Earl propoſed; but I aſſured him I did not think my caſe ſo deſperate yet, as to require my taking ſuch a deſperate remedy."

The countenance of Miſs Bertram, which, as Lord Morville approached the carriage, was

was ſpread with that vivacity which was its natural expreſſion, ſettled, during his laſt ſpeech, into a gloom; but this was chaſed inſtantly, and ſhe quickly rallied thoſe gay ſpirits which had nearly forſook her. But though this was not remarked by the heedleſs Lord Morville, it did not paſs unnoticed by Henry and Alicia.

The converſation was renewed, and much ſprightly *badinage* was uttered by Miſs Bertram before they reached the Caſtle.

"I will come more frequently to Malieveren (ſaid his Lordſhip, at quitting it in the evening) than I have of late. You have all been either ill, or out of ſpirits."

"Stupid enough in all reaſon (ſaid Miſs Bertram), and ſhall remain ſo. If you come frequently here, we ſhall infect you with gravity; and then the Earl will find you have no kind of occaſion for his recipe."

"A fair challenge, Mary," exclaimed Mr. Bertram.

"If ſo, Harry, I will not decline it;—was I (continued he, in a half whiſper) to be obliged to have recourſe to the recipe to cure my wounds."

From this period the viſits of Lord Morville, at Malieveren, were regular and frequent; and Miſs Bertram's vivacity returned; but ſhe ſeemed to have parted with a large portion of her giddineſs of temper.

A latent deſire to render herſelf agreeable to Lord Morville had, from their coming into Yorkſhire to the overturn of the phaeton, thrown her into various ſituations, which, had they been known to Lady Bertram, ſhe would have judged highly indecorous. But when this misfortune happened through her means, remorſe for her folly, and ſorrow for the ſufferings of her friend, ſunk deeply on her ſpirits;—it was vanity—it was love of admiration which had ſtimulated her—both were moſt ſeverely puniſhed. Another paſſion lay in a manner dormant in her heart; and

and it was rouſed by Lord Morville ſo generouſly offering himſelf for a journey, attended with much fatigue, in order to alleviate the ſufferings of Alicia. Then it was Miſs Bertram felt herſelf intereſted in Lord Morville beyond the tranſient pleaſure of being admired merely as a pretty girl. At Malton-park, his eaſe and good-humour reſtored him to her own good opinion: tenderly attentive to amuſe, or to remove her anxiety, he then threw aſide the giddy trifling character he generally aſſumed. Every day ſhe diſcovered freſh graces in his manners or perſon; each day preſented her with ſome amiable trait in his diſpoſition, never before obſerved by her.

At Malton-park, ſpite of her friend's danger, ſhe felt a kind of happineſs for which ſhe knew not how to account. Returned to the Caſtle, Miſs Bertram was grave, abſent, reſtleſs, and found a ſecret diſcontent pervade her heart, and influence her temper.

Three days after the visit of Lord Morville at the Castle, the Earl of Knaresborough, with his son and Lady Augusta, spent the day, *en famille*, at Malieveren. Each succeeding interview seemed to increase Alicia's admiration of her Ladyship. Her countenance was peculiarly interesting; and her features and complexion were those of a first-rate beauty; there sat upon her features a kind of expression, which, to Alicia, appeared like concealed sorrow.—"What can cause it?" said she to Miss Bertram; who laughing at the romantic ideas of Alicia, she resolved to make no further enquiries on this subject; and as she again and again viewed the same gentle countenance with the same expression, she imagined it was the traces of the highly wrought sensibility of Lady Augusta's heart, which was displayed on her features. The goodness of heart, the affability of manners, and the clear unbiassed understanding of Lady Augusta, were oft praised by Alicia to Lady Bertram. Often, in her own mind, would she compare her with Mr. Bertram.—

Alone are they worthy of each other, would ſhe think; an union ſo every way deſirable would make all happy. But, alas! how little do we know ourſelves—how deceitful is the human heart—how inſenſible are we to its workings;—too late do we acquire a knowledge of them, and, as we look back upon ruined happineſs, we wonder at our blindneſs.

When Alicia ſaw them at Malton-park, in her firſt viſit, the agitation of Lady Auguſta, and the ill-concealed emotions of Mr. Bertram, both were attributed by her to that paſſion they ſeemed born to inſpire in each other; and Alicia felt unhappy. No longer did the aſſiduities of Henry pleaſe as before; the charm was broken, they had loſt their value;—ſhe filled at beſt, ſhe thought, but a ſecondary ſtation in his heart;—Lady Auguſta was the object of Henry's love. Yet when at Malieveren ſhe again ſaw Lady Auguſta, heard her tender enquiries, Alicia daſhed off the vagrant tear; and, as ſhe liſtened to her,

and joined in her intereſting converſation, ſhe thought not of the degradation ſhe felt in being ſecond to this lovely and intereſting woman. But when ſhe ſaw her Ladyſhip and Henry in earneſt diſcourſe, ſtanding at one of the windows for a conſiderable time; and when ſhe was again joined by them, and marked in their countenances the evident traces of emotion, and ſaw that Lady Auguſta had wept, her ſpirits ſunk, and ſhe alſo could have wept;—it was with difficulty ſhe could rally her ſpirits, or continue the converſation.

"Remember Thurſday," ſaid Lady Auguſta to Henry, in a whiſper; which eſcaped not Alicia, as ſhe quitted the drawing-room. Retired to her chamber, Alicia gave a looſe to her feelings, and burſt into tears; thus relieved, ſhe grew more compoſed, and chided her folly;—then began an enquiry into the cauſe of the agitation of ſpirits ſhe felt; the reſult of this enquiry tended not to ſatisfy her. She accuſed herſelf of injuſtice, of envy;—why was it ſhe envied Lady Auguſta

the place ſhe held in Henry's heart?—ſtill would he love her—ſtill, as before, would he be her friend—ſtill would he look upon her as a ſiſter—and, for his ſake, would the amiable Lady Auguſta alſo love her. Such were Alicia's attempts at conſolation as ſhe retired to reſt; yet, as the next day ſhe liſtened to Lady Auguſta's well-merited praiſe from Henry, her ſoul ſickened. How is this? thought ſhe; I am never weary of extolling this charming woman myſelf; why do I not liſten then, with equal pleaſure to Mr. Bertram?

On Thurſday, Henry abſented himſelf a great part of the day. Alicia ſought amuſement—ſought to divert her thoughts, but all in vain; they were fixed at Malton-park, upon Lady Auguſta and Mr. Bertram; who, when he joined the family at dinner, wore a penſive air, which his ſiſter obſerved and rallied him upon; but he appeared not inclined to triſle, and quitted the room as ſoon as dinner was removed.

It was now the laſt week in October, and Alicia ſuppoſed, as was the cuſtom of Sir Robert, they would, the beginning of November, go to London; and, as uſual, ſpend Chriſtmas at Acorn-bank. The Baronet had been at Bertram Caſtle, but went unaccompanied, as her Ladyſhip was ordered not to go farther North. Sir Robert declared his intention of departing from this rule, and ſaid he would ſpend Chriſtmas at Malieveren, not meaning to attend the firſt call of Parliament.

"What! continue in Yorkſhire, Sir Robert (exclaimed Miſs Bertram)--at the Caſtle till next year? What muſt become of us all the winter? Oh! I am ſure, Sir, you are merely jeſting."

I beg leave to remark, that at the period of which I write, the country Members made it more a point, than at preſent, of conſtant attendance upon that duty they were elected to diſcharge towards their conſtituents; at leaſt, ſuch were the ideas of this upright

upright Member of the Legiſlative Power, Sir Robert Bertram, that unleſs ſickneſs prevented, he regularly attended the Houſe of Commons upon all ſubjects.

Sir Robert replied to Miſs Bertram, that he meant not to jeſt, but was perfectly ſerious. "The Earl (ſaid he) alſo ſtays at Malton-park; Lady Auguſta, I am ſure, does not repine at his deciſion; ſhe declares ſhe ſhall be infinitely happier than if ſhe was mingling in all the gaiety of the metropolis. And, I aſſure you, Lord Morville very politely has informed me, that the neighbourhood of Malieveren would render the Park bearable—very bearable—a little longer."

Sir Robert's ſpeech produced in his daughter and Alicia very different effects:—Miſs Bertram's eyes ſparkled with pleaſure, whilſt ſhe exclaimed againſt his Lordſhip's *bearable*, and *very bearable*.—"I wiſh (ſaid ſhe) I had power to remove mountains, and I would puſh the Park acroſs the county, that he might diſcover

diſcover what a freſh neighbourhood would enable him to ſupport."

Alicia's countenance changed; Lady Auguſta in Henry's ſociety forgot all elſe. Yes it was very obvious ſhe loved him; and if ſo, could it be wondered ſhe thought no pleaſure ſo great as ſhe might receive in his company. How preferable, how far preferable was one hour's converſation with Mr. Bertram to thoſe gay ſcenes of diſſipation, which, to ſuch a mind as Lady Auguſta's, wanted power to dazzle, or force to pleaſe.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING a period of ſo many months, it is natural to ſuppoſe, intereſted as Mr. Bertram was for our heroine, he had talked with her concerning the letters of her mother; of the period which, ſhe had ſaid, was to decide, ſhe ſuppoſed, her future life. She had in theſe converſations informed Henry ſhe yet was ignorant of every particular ſhe had expected to have learnt; that her fate, her birth, her connexions were yet wrapped in obſcurity; that yet ſhe was doomed to ſilence on thoſe ſubjects; and, ſituated as ſhe then was

was, it appeared ſtill uncertain when ſhe ſhould be able to remove the veil of myſtery which ſo ſtrangely involved her.

" If then, Alicia, you are ſituated ſo that you cannot, or dare not, penetrate this cloſely guarded ſecret, might not my preſence encourage; or could not the office be delegated?"

" Ah! would to heaven, Henry, I dared ſay you ſhall guide—ſhall protect the forlorn Alicia through terrors which may well appal! With you, Henry, they would loſe their power;—then I would know no fear.—But, alas! Henry, already too well you know this is forbidden. Nay, the very ſpeaking upon this ſubject, as already I have, is an indirect violation of my oath."

" I will not then, my dear Alicia, again intrude this ſubject; only aſſure me, if you require aſſiſtance, you will ſeek that aſſiſtance from me only."

" Ah! Henry, if not from you, from no one ſhall Alicia require it. If not relying upon

upon your honour, your courage, your friendſhip, on whom ſhall ſhe rely? where, but with you, ſeek to repoſe her griefs?"

Since the time of Alicia's being thrown from the phæton, ſickneſs and other cauſes had contributed to baniſh from her mind, in ſome degree, her purpoſed viſit to Oakdale. It was now winter, and the probability leſſened of her finding a plauſible excuſe for her abſence to Lady Bertram; who knew ſhe had neither friends nor connexions but what ſhe formed by Mr. Meynel's means, in England.

The month of November, its ſhort days and heavy ſkies, advanced to their cloſe without any repinings having been heard in either the family at Malton-park or Malieveren; nor was there any want of amuſement: ſometimes large parties of the neighbouring families were aſſembled, and a ball or concert cloſed the evening, aſſiſted by muſical performers from York.

December

December came in more heavily; for the firſt week Lord Morville and Mr. Bertram were both abſent. Both returned, as they had gone, on the ſame day; but his Lordſhip returned with his accuſtomed hilarity, whilſt Henry, complaining of fatigue and indiſpoſition, retired to his chamber; and when Alicia went to her's, the pale and agitated countenance Mr. Bertram wore, purſued her—he was ill—he was unhappy.

In the morning, Sir Robert and his ſon had a long conference in an apartment which joined Lady Bertram's dreſſing-room, where Alicia was ſeated a few minutes alone before Miſs Bertram came in; and ſhe heard Sir Robert, with a voice louder than he commonly ſpoke in, ſay, "Throw not thus away your happineſs; check thoſe ſtrange romantic ideas; truſt me, Henry, they will work your miſery."—The reply was in a lower key; Alicia heard it not. Miſs Bertram entered, and ſhortly after they learned that Sir Robert and his ſon were gone to Malton-park; from which,

which place they returned in the evening, when her Ladyſhip enquired if it was ſettled. "Yes, pretty nearly ſo," was the Baronet's reply.

The following day the Earl of Knareſborough and Lord Morville viſited at Malieveren. In the evening Miſs Bertram came running into Alicia's dreſſing-room—"Gueſs what all the fuſs has been about, Alicia, between the Earl and Sir Robert."

"It is (replied Alicia, trembling as ſhe ſpoke) very unlikely I ſhould gueſs."

"Well then I will tell you: they have ſet their hearts upon a wedding."

"Mr. Bertram then (ſaid Alicia, faintly) is to marry Lady Auguſta."

"No, you are all wrong; they have diſcovered Lord Morville wants a help-mate, and ſo wiſely concluded I was the fitteſt perſon to fix upon. But I have no idea of being forced to marry a man againſt his inclination, merely by way of reforming him; for that is, I am ſure, the Earl's ſage ideas.

You

You remember (ſaid ſhe, laughing) the recipe he preſcribed to Morville. As for Sir Robert, I dare ſay he does it to pleaſe his old friend; and alſo, I believe, to get rid of his daughter whilſt he can manage her."

Alicia felt relieved by this information, and alſo knew, however Mary choſe to treat the offer made, it was what ſhe wiſhed, as ſhe was certain his Lordſhip had conſiderable intereſt in her heart; ſhe therefore talked to Miſs Bertram, in order to make her ſenſible of the ſtate of her heart, till ſhe was half offended.

The plain matter of fact was, that it had been a ſettled plan between the Earl and Baronet for many years back, to unite, if poſſible, the two families by a double marriage; for this plan being accompliſhed, the Earl propoſed to Lady Auguſta ſhe ſhould accept the addreſſes of Henry Bertram; but this ſhe abſolutely declared ſhe never would; and when again urged on the ſubject, ſaid, if her

her father inſiſted upon her compliance, ſhe would be tempted to take ſome raſh ſtep rather than ſubmit. Scarce could the Earl credit her poſitive aſſertions; for her manner to Mr. Bertram gave a flat contradiction to ſuch a refuſal.

This plan was the cauſe of the Earl's viſit to Malton-park with Lady Auguſta;—this, alſo, had kept both families ſo late in the winter in Yorkſhire; for though Miſs Bertram had taken little trouble to diſguiſe her feelings in regard to Lord Morville, his Lordſhip had repeatedly declared he meant not to marry, at leaſt not for many years.

Miſs Bertram, it was evident, was the ſole attraction which drew him to Malieveren; yet, at other times, ſhe ſeemed to have no power over him, and he appeared as indifferent to her as the plaineſt and moſt diſagreeable woman in a large circle. Various hints had been given to his Lordſhip concerning a match with Miſs Bertram; but theſe hints furthered

furthered not in the leaſt the wiſhed for purpoſe; he inwardly laughed at the ſchemes of his father, and reſolved to diſappoint all parties.

Meanwhile all had been fixed regarding fortune and ſettlements, between the Earl and Sir Robert.

Sixty thouſand pounds, payable out of the Malieveren eſtate, had been ſettled upon the younger children of Lady Bertram, by the will of Lord Malieveren, her brother, which of courſe would centre in Miſs Bertrám; but as yet there was a probability that William March might, by dint of corrupting witneſſes, make his claim good on theſe eſtates; the Baronet therefore agreed to give his daughter, on her wedding-day, thirty thouſand pounds, and the other thirty thouſand, in caſe the Malieveren eſtates ſhould be loſt, to be ſecured on other property; but ſhould no ſuch claim ſucceed, the whole ſixty thouſand was, as by her uncle's

cle's will, to reſt with the future Lady Morville, after the deceaſe of her mother.

It was not till after Lord Morville's return from his late excurſion with Henry, that his conſent to this union was obtained. No time was loſt; his Lordſhip came the next day to the Caſtle to proſecute a ſuit, in which he ſuppoſed he had nothing to dread from a refuſal by the lady.

The wiſhes of Sir Robert, and intentions of Lord Morville, were diſcloſed by Lady Bertram to her daughter; ſoon after which the Baronet introduced his Lordſhip, and left him to make a declaration; which was done with ſuch a degree of *non-chalance*, that Miſs Bertram muſt indeed have been blinded by love, and dead to every feeling of female pride, had ſhe conſented to give the affirmative ſo heedleſsly aſked. But this was by no means the caſe; her vanity was not humbled, but moſt powerfully rouſed; and, as ſhe liſtened to the laughter-loving Viſcount, all the pre-

ference her heart had granted him, fled, at leaſt for the time; and had Miſs Bertram poſſeſſed the power of Meduſa, Lord Morville had ſhared the fate of that celebrated lady's lover: but wiſhes are ineffectual, and ſhe ſwallowed the vexation that almoſt prevented her utterance, and replied, with a gay air, that ſhe felt no more inclination for matrimony than his Lordſhip.—"I dare (ſaid ſhe) bet my reverſion of the Malievеren eſtate (upon which, I imagine, your affections may be fixed, in hopes your hedgerows may not have to be felled for a few years) that the Earl and Sir Robert have been laying their wiſe heads together upon this ſubject. But pray now tell me how they managed to get you ſo patiently to acquieſce?"

His Lordſhip was ſo aſtoniſhed, he ſcarce could reply, for he was by no means prepared for this rebuff; at length, with a ſtammering kind of articulation, he ſaid ſomething about his having always admired her; and that ſhe could

could be no ſtranger to the regard he felt for her, before his ſuit was backed by the Earl.

" Oh! I knew it was the Earl (ſaid Miſs Bertram, laughing); well, I ſhall take care to inform him what a good boy you are.—Oh! (continued ſhe, with affected grimace) what a bleſſing are dutiful children! what a comfort will you be to the Earl in his old age! (then reſuming her former gaiety) I ſhall, however, thank your Lordſhip to inform the Earl, I am ſo extremely hurt, that I do not feel diſpoſed to compliance; for I would as ſoon marry, was he alive, my grandfather, the tenth Lord Malieveren (his picture hangs ſomewhere in one of the rooms), as your inſenſible Lordſhip."

" Oh! I beg pardon; I had almoſt forgot what you had reaſon to expect. I believe I ſhould have made the declaration upon my knees, with a face as long as my arm, and innumerable ſighs, and flaming ſpeeches."—His Lordſhip was advancing to Miſs Bertram, who ſtarted up—

"Good by, my Lord; keep the ſpeeches till you have another occaſion."—And quitting the room, ran through the hall, and up ſtairs to her own chamber, where ſhe gave way to an hyſterical fit of weeping. Thoſe tears were ſoon dried off, and ſhe determined to make Lord Morville ſenſible of her power; to hear him ſigh, and ſue for her pity;—and then, Oh! then, would ſhe ſcorn him. Thus did ſhe feel when ſhe communicated to Alicia, as ſhe ſaid, what all the fuſs had been about; but her vexation, her bitter diſappointment, ſhe reſolved equally with her meditated revenge to conceal.

Thus were the projects of the Earl and Baronet defeated; as, at preſent, no alliance was likely to be formed between their children.

Another interview, in a few days, took place between Miſs Bertram and Lord Morville; when he, with his accuſtomed gaiety, enquired what was the ſentence to be inflicted for his preſumption.

"I be-

"I believe (ſaid Miſs Bertram) the ſevereſt puniſhment I, in the plenitude of my power, can inflict, will be to command you to come to Malieveren every day, let it rain, ſnow, or blow; whether it is a hunting day, or no hunting."

"Agreed; I ſubmit, in hopes the epithet of *inſenſible*, you were pleaſed to beſtow, will no longer be a juſt one;—by beholding you, it will ſurely be impoſſible to retain a title to it."

"This then is the eſſay you make;—well this ſpeech may do for the firſt."

Lord Morville replied in the ſame ſtyle; and it was agreed he ſhould viſit as before at the Caſtle.

The Caſtle-gates were thrown open at Chriſtmas: the gentry of the neighbourhood feaſted with the Baronet, whilſt the tenantry were regaled in the hall; nor were the poor forgotten—long tables were ſpread with good cheer, and the whole pariſh of

Malieveren were entertained beneath the roof of Sir Robert Bertram; for ſuch had been the cuſtom of the ancient perſons to whom the Caſtle belonged. Since the death of the laſt, this cuſtom had been but once obſerved before; as the Baronet had only ſpent Chriſtmas at the Caſtle twice, and the ſecond time he was confined by ſickneſs.

On the firſt day of the new year, the ſame unlimited invitation was given; and after dinner, muſic being provided, agreeable to the ancient cuſtom, the gentry danced with the tenants and ſuperior ſervants of the Caſtle, the owners of which led off the firſt country-dance; the Earl of Knaſborough danced with Miſs Bertram, Lord Morville with Alicia, and Mr. Bertram with Lady Auguſta. The laſt couple were ſeated apparently in deep and intereſting converſation, when, by the change in dancing, Alicia ſtood ſo near, that ſhe, who was more attentive to their diſcourſe than either the muſic or figure, overheard her Ladyſhip ſay, as ſhe drew from her

her pocket the caſe of a miniature picture, "For heaven's ſake then, Mr. Bertram, be cautious."—Taking it, he put it haſtily into his pocket, ſaying, "Depend on my honour, my ſecrecy."

This circumſtance dwelt upon Alicia's mind. Sure it was her own picture Lady Auguſta had given Henry;—was it then love which made him wear, as he had done for the laſt three weeks, that look of dejection?—yet why, if he loved Lady Auguſta, not proclaim it?—ſure no reaſon could exiſt why the Earl and Sir Robert would not equally approve of this match, as they had of Miſs Bertram's marriage with Lord Morville.—When alone with him, if Alicia raiſed her eyes to Mr. Bertram's ſhe found them as it were rivetted upon her, and then inſtantly withdrawn, and ſome trivial ſubject of converſation ſtarted; oft would he ſit for a very conſiderable time without changing his poſture or ſpeaking; whilſt in company, if only a third perſon was preſent, Mr. Bertram exerted himſelf as

uſual, yet this Alicia imagined appeared forced.

Henry was unhappy; and Alicia, as ſhe witneſſed it, felt how deeply ſhe was intereſted in whatever concerned him; ſometimes ſo anxious did ſhe feel that ſhe meditated enquiring of himſelf, but the words hitherto had died upon her lips.

On the ſixth of January the two families from Malton-park and Malieveren reached London. At the firſt drawing-room Miſs Bertram was preſented, and at the Queen's birth-day appeared at Court with much *eclat*. The beautiful ſymmetry of her features and figure, her freſh and unſtained complexion, with the elegant and fanciful diſpoſition of her dreſs, were alike ſubjects for admiration, and ſuppreſſed envy.

Miſs Bertram poſſeſſed much vivacity, and more than an ordinary ſhare of beauty; that beauty was new to the univerſal ſtare with which

which it was received; and ſhe became inſtantly the ruling toaſt of the day.—It was Miſs Bertram who led every faſhion; her colours, her caps, hats, and dreſſes were copied, and from the metropolis diſperſed over the kingdom; and ſeldom has the goddeſs of variety been repreſented by a mortal who better preſerved her attribute; willingly would every *marchand da mode* have contributed to the depoſition of her preſent repreſentative, for all declared there was no chance of keeping pace with her whims. In one thing alone was ſhe ſteady, invariably wearing colours which, with her bright and dazzling complexion, could not disfigure her, yet were to moſt other women highly unbecoming.

Lady Bertram, to comply with her daughter's wiſh, ſpent her time in one conſtant unceaſing round of engagements; though, as I have before remarked, it was not what ſhe either approved or was fond of; nor was it

pleaſant to Alicia, who at times would hint to her gay friend the ſad waſte of time it cauſed.

On ſuch occaſions Miſs Bertram would perhaps enquire if ſhe had not ſufficient leiſure at Malieveren; or would, laughing, interrupt Alicia, and aſk her if ſhe had ſeen Lady Caroline Langden yeſterday, dreſſed in a petticoat the ſame colour as the gown ſhe herſelf had worn the preceding week.—"Oh! horrid—did you ever, Alicia, ſee any thing ſo delightfully ridiculous, ſuch a fright ſhe was; the colour of her gown ſo ill correſponded with the coat."

Alicia agreed with her friend it was ridiculous; that it was a fooliſh variety, which was beſt puniſhed by laughter;—but ſhe did not ſo fully enter into Miſs Bertram's ideas, as to be able to conceive how it was Lady Caroline was *delightfully* ridiculous.

Henry

Henry ſighed for the calm ſcenes of Acornbank, or the romantic hills and dales around Malieveren, where he had liſtened to Alicia, and where every plot of ground was endeared by the remembrance; now he ſeldom ſaw her except in company, and the mornings were equally engroſſed as the evenings.—This racket after amuſement agreed not with Lady Bertram's ſtill not well-eſtabliſhed health; and ſhe was frequently obliged to delegate the charge of her daughter and Alicia to ſome of her friends, generally Lady Llandovry, and ſtay at home to nurſe the cold caught the preceding evening.

The high health and ſpirits of Miſs Bertram bore all the fatigue ſhe impoſed upon herſelf, without any viſible diminution of either; but Alicia, Henry imagined, ſuffered from the late hours, fatigue of dreſs, and diſſipation of ſpirits; and ſincerely wiſhed the time arrived which would ſend them back for the ſummer to Malieveren Caſtle.

Small indeed was the time Alicia now had to think of thoſe affairs neareſt her heart; at preſent her viſit to Oakdale was impracticable, and its gloomy and myſterious horrors were a ſtrange contraſt to the gay and ſplendid ſcenes ſhe now witneſſed; nor could the gay, light, and trifling converſation in which ſhe joined, recall, by any ſimilarity of ideas, the laſt SOLEMN INJUNCTION of her mother, or the melancholy ſights ſhe had diſcloſed.—She now ſeldom met Lady Auguſta but in mixed company; nor did ſhe, as at Malieveren, feel, from the preference ſhe ſuppoſed Mr. Bertram entertained for her Ladyſhip, as ſhe ſaw him pay her merely ſuch kind of attentions, as the natural politeneſs of his heart taught him was her right; but thoſe attentions were by him indifferently paid to Lady Auguſta, and every other lady preſent.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABOUT this time a circumſtance happened, which revived in the mind of Alicia her former uneaſy feelings:—it was one day when a ſelect party had dined at Sir Robert's, conſiſting of the Llandovry family, and that of Lord Mounſorrel's, with the Earl of Knaſborough, his ſon and daughter; when the young ladies were ſtanding round the drawing-room fire, after quitting the dining-parlour, that Lady Auguſta drew a ſmall miniature out of her pocket with her handkerchief, and it fell on the floor.—Miſs Bertram ſtooping for

for it, exclaimed ſhe was determined to ſee whoſe likeneſs it might be; Mr. Bertram juſt entering at this inſtant, ſnatched it from his ſiſter, and preſented it to Lady Auguſta, ſaying, he hoped ſhe would excuſe the giddy trifling of Miſs Bertram.

"Oh! I am ſatisfied, quite convinced, my dear brother. I meant not to offend her Ladyſhip; and the giddy trifler, Mr. Bertram, can keep a ſecret, even though ſhe has not been ſworn to ſecrecy; ſo do not fear I ſhall betray you."

After much had been ſaid on the ſubject, Miſs Bertram declared ſhe had not ſeen who the portrait was intended for; and that ſhe only meant to teaſe her brother, in revenge for his interference. Lady Auguſta could not wholly conceal her vexation; but this avowal of Miſs Bertram's reſtored her to her accuſtomed cheerfulneſs and good-humour.

The

The party ſpent the evening at the Opera, and ſupped, after a conſiderable addition had been made to the number, at the Earl of Llandovry's.

" Oh! my dear Alicia (ſaid Miſs Bertram, after they reached home), I am juſt dying to tell you that I was certain, although it was but a ſlight glance I had of it, that it really and poſitively is Henry's picture which the ſly Lady Auguſta is ſo fond of; for once before I caught her looking at it, and ſhe ſlipped it into her pocket. Well, is it not mighty ſtrange? Morville told me that when we were at the Caſtle, ſhe refuſed to marry Henry, though all parties but herſelf were for it. Did you not obſerve how ſadly diſconcerted both looked, till I ſaid I had only been jeſting?—But I'll bid you good night; we muſt be ready for our drive before one o'clock; we will talk this over another time.

Miſs Bertram having diſcloſed this troubleſome ſecret, quitted Alicia; who now felt little

little inclination for ſleep.—Has Lady Auguſta then once refuſed Mr. Bertram?—ſcarce could Alicia credit it; ſure ſhe could not refuſe him!—yet the air of dejection which Henry had worn, the laſt month of their ſtay at Malieveren, ſurely authorized the belief; and the picture Lady Auguſta gave to Mr. Bertram, on New Year's Day, was certainly her own; it was given with charges, and received with aſſurances of ſecrecy. Mary had juſt informed her that Henry's picture was in her Ladyſhip's poſſeſſion; this mutual interchange argued a mutual regard, which ill agreed with her having refuſed him.—Oh! no, thought Alicia, he has not been refuſed; the Earl has doubtleſs other views for his daughter;—this then muſt be the cauſe of the concealment of their love;—this then was why Sir Robert charged Mr. Bertram not to throw away his happineſs, by cheriſhing romantic ideas; for his, equally with Lady Auguſta's, muſt be a hopeleſs paſſion.

At

At the uſual hour Alicia appeared in the breakfaſt-room; but, after a night of ſleepleſs agitation, her looks ſpoke an indiſpoſition that attracted enquiry: ſhe pleaded a ſlight cold, as the cauſe of her appearance; and Lady Bertram inſiſted ſhe ſhould ſtay at home;—this, ſhe replied, there was no neceſſity for, as the drive would make her quite well.—Miſs Bertram declared ſhe was of the ſame opinion, and ſhe ſhould hate to go without her.—Lady Bertram was, however, poſitive; Miſs Bertram, therefore, accompanied by a party, went to Richmond, whilſt her Ladyſhip alſo quitted Alicia to make ſome viſits; when, for the firſt time ſince they left Malieveren, ſhe found herſelf alone with Mr. Bertram.

I fear much for you, Alicia (ſaid he); this gay life is injurious to your health; I have imagined you looked pale; and I alſo think ſome portion of that animation, which ſo diſtinguiſhed your converſation and manner, has deſerted you:—May I then enquire

is

is this cauſed by indiſpoſition, or does, at this period, ſome painful circumſtance preſs on your mind?"

"I like not, it is true, Mr. Bertram, this conſtant round of diſſipation in which I am immerſed; yet I do not think it can affect my health. Miſs Bertram, who always appeared, and is in reality, more delicate than I am, ſuffers not from it; nor, at preſent, have I any particular cauſe of anxiety, but what I for ſome time have ſuſtained. Oft my conſcience upbraids me for neglecting, as I yet have done, the laſt SOLEMN INJUNCTIONS of my mother; this oft renders my nights reſtleſs, my ſlumbers broken; no other cauſe exiſts, Henry, for the change you have remarked."

"It is, Alicia, the cruel reſtraint you feel that thus affects you; ſeparated as we at preſent are, you cannot ever ſpeak to me in your accuſtomed way on this ſubject; would you but repoſe in my friendſhip, and eternal ſilence, and freely diſcloſe thoſe ſorrows which conſume you, they would be lightened at leaſt.

Alicia,

Alicia, talk to me of your feelings, if even you ſpeak not of their cauſe."

"Ah! Henry, why aſk me to ſpeak of my ſorrows—why bid me diſcloſe my feelings?—You too have griefs which you think me unworthy to be truſted with; I have marked your drooping ſpirits—I have ſeen you exert yourſelf when your heart, or I am much deceived, has been very ſad;—you too, Henry, are changed; you confide not in me; you think lightly of my friendſhip——."

"Ah! Alicia, my woes are, like your's, ſtrangely myſterious. You tell me I am changed; true, I grant, is the allegation—but from you, from all whom I love, ſhall the cauſe be concealed!—Yes, my fortitude ſhall not ſink beneath the evil I endure, however painfully borne by me. But hear me, Alicia, (he continued, with ſo hurried and agitated a manner as to alarm her) it is by the hope of retaining your friendſhip that I ſhall be enabled to ſuſtain myſelf; why then cruelly tell me I think lightly of it?—I am, alas! little diſpoſed to bear this—I am little inclined

clined to trifle at this moment; but you know not how I am ſituated—you are unconſcious of the agony which now rends my heart, and that at ſome periods threatens nearly Reaſon herſelf. Remember then, Alicia, your promiſe, your ſacred promiſe, given to me; remember I alone am to ſhare your griefs—on me alone you promiſed to rely; remember this, that let whoever will gain your love, Henry Bertram claims your friendſhip; he aſks but that—in ſo doing, he but refers to your promiſe."

"Henry (ſaid Alicia, with all the calmneſs ſhe could aſſume), I comprehend you not. Why is it I ſee you thus agitated? why bid me remember my promiſe? why thus, as it were, inſiſt upon my friendſhip? It was not granted to your commands, nor have they power to retain it; no, it was the reſult of heartfelt conviction of your worth—of how juſtly you were eſtimable. Well you know how highly I have proved your friendſhip, how painfully I would feel were you to withdraw it;—why then remind me of promiſes,

promiſes, which my heart aſſented to, nor has ever entertained a thought of violating?"

"Do you then, Alicia, regard me as you once did? is my friendſhip ſtill dear to you? Whatever you may hereafter learn of the miſerable Henry, remember your friendſhip, your eſteem, is valued above all elſe the world contains; remember (he continued, in a voice ſcarcely articulate), remember he never aſked you to love him, but as a favourite brother!"

Alicia ſaw the deep agitation Mr. Bertram ſuſtained, though ignorant from what ſource the diſcompoſure originated; yet ſhe pitied, and endeavoured to ſooth, to conſole, and to reſtore his ſpirits to their uſual bias; but thoſe efforts ſeemed rather to increaſe, than allay his emotions.

Ah! why (he exclaimed) did I venture upon this interview—why not rather, as I have of late done, avoid you! why did I tell you I was miſerable, and impart to that gentle

gentle heart my woes.—Alas! Alicia (ſaid Mr. Bertram, as haſtily he quitted the room), I will not again expoſe you to ſuch a ſcene; your kindly bearing with me but adds to my miſery."——

Whatever was the miſery which Mr. Bertram ſuſtained, he had communicated the ſame feeling to Alicia. In vain did ſhe run over every probable cauſe in her own mind; but conjecture was at a loſs, unleſs that Lady Auguſta was inauſpicious to his ſuit; yet, even in that affair, there was a contradiction of proofs, there was ſomething myſterious regarding it;—in thinking over all Henry had ſaid, in joining it with his hurried accent, his agitated manner, and in endeavouring to account for it, ſhe ſpent her time till dinner was announced, and ſhe was obliged to conſtrain herſelf.

In the dining-room, Alicia had the pleaſure to ſee Mr. Meynell, who was juſt come from

Scotland, where he had been for the laſt three months.

" At Edinburgh (ſaid he to Lady Bertram) I had the happineſs to renew ſome pleaſant acquaintances made early in life, which was the cauſe I prolonged my ſtay, after finiſhing the affairs that took me into Scotland."

Alicia hoped Mr. Meynell might have heard of Mrs. Dalrymple, but choſe not to enquire till ſhe was alone with him; and not being ſo well as to allow of her dreſſing, ſhe did not accompany her Ladyſhip and Miſs Bertram (who was returned from her excurſion), to the Dutcheſs of Wakefield's route.

Mr. Meynell, when the ladies went to dreſs, was left alone with Alicia, whom he informed, that Mrs. Dalrymple, unable any longer to ſuſtain the climate, had returned to Scotland; and was now with her father, and in a very poor ſtate of health.

" Have

"Have you then, Mr. Meynell, ſeen Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"I did; ſhe was ſo kind as to come from Mr. Campbell's as far as Dumfries, on purpoſe to give me a meeting; but ſhe is ſo changed by ſickneſs, I ſcarce could recognize her.—Mr. Dalrymple's affairs are, I find, by no means flouriſhing; and anxiety has largely contributed, I dare ſay, to the alteration I ſaw in the appearance of this amiable woman."

Alicia made particular enquiries regarding her early benefactreſs: the anſwers Mr. Meynell gave only ſerved to increaſe her concern. Before he bade Alicia good night, he gave her a letter from Mrs. Dalrymple, who had for ſome time ceaſed to be a regular correſpondent. In this ſhe informed our heroine of having, by means of ſome of Mr. Dalrymple's friends at New York, enquired after Mr. Kirby; but could gain no other information, than when he left that place, he was well; but that thoſe ſettlements where

his property lay, had not long after been attacked by the Indians, who had burnt Mr. Kirby's houſe, as they had done ſeveral others, killing all who fell in their way; amongſt which number, it was ſuppoſed, was the unfortunate Kirby.

"Alas! my beloved friend, my parent (ejaculated Alicia), it was for me you undertook the long voyage, the toilſome journey; for me you combated unknown danger; for me was your life forfeited."—Alicia gave free ſcope to thoſe drops that courſed down her cheeks as ſhe lamented over her earlieſt friend. "Thy heart was rich in every virtue! No, never, my beloved parent, for ſuch thou waſt to me—no never, never ſhall I forget thee! The goods of fortune thou eſtimated but as they diſpenſed comfort to others; thy wants were few—thy wiſhes limited—thy ſoul was the ſeat of kindneſs, which thy rough exterior promiſed not!"

The ſorrows of Alicia were partly calmed by venting them, and ſhe again took up Mrs. Dalrymple's letter; again ſhe read that part where ſhe ſeemed to hint at her approaching diſſolution, and the dependent ſtate of her two little girls.—Alicia wished for fortune, for independence, as ſhe thought of Mrs. Dalrymple. A thought croſſed her mind, but it was a tranſitory one, and ſoon vaniſhed, that ſhe had too haſtily refuſed the offer Mr. Carliel had made, of marrying and ſettling two thouſand a-year upon her; ſhe ought to have left the determination of her fate to thoſe friends whoſe bounty ſupported her; then, had ſhe accepted this propoſal, ſhe could have offered her kind benefactreſs an aſylum, her children too; but this idea was chaſed;—no, not even to ſave her beloved friend from poverty, could ſhe conſent to marry a man, whoſe higheſt claim upon her would be gratitude and eſteem;—no, ſuch a marriage would be but a legal proſtitution; and her ſoul revolted, as it had before done, at the idea.

My fair readers may, I fear, deem me regardleſs of my duty, in neglecting to mention this offer of Mr. Carleil to our heroine at the preciſe time it happened, which was, however, only ten days preceding; but as it no way either agitated or intereſted Alicia at the time, I paſſed it over with other matters of leſs importance.—Mr. Carliel had received a polite, but ſteady refuſal, and when that was done, Alicia thought no more of it, except, as I have juſt mentioned, the fleeting idea which croſſed her mind, as ſhe mourned over Mrs. Dalrymple's misfortunes, and her own inability to aſſiſt her.

Perhaps it may be ſuppoſed that Alicia, accuſtomed to reject, and have lovers ſighing at her feet, found it an eaſy taſk to refuſe them, and that ſhe was already well verſed in rejecting ſuch offers; but this was by no means the caſe;—truth obliges me to declare, however degrading to my heroine, that this was the only offer hitherto made her, although ſhe had appeared almoſt for three months in

the firſt circles of faſhion, had frequented all public places, under the patronage of Lady Bertram, and was moreover a new face.

Yet the men all declared ſhe was a divine creature, and not a few roundly ſwore Miſs Bertram was infinitely inferior to Miſs Sleigh, both in face and perſon; and thoſe who were admitted into the ſelect parties of the Baronet, agreed ſhe was as much ſuperior to Miſs Bertram in accompliſhments of every kind, as that lady was to many others in point of beauty.

Alicia had, ſave from Mr. Carliel, received no ſerious proof of her faſcinating powers, whilſt for Miſs Bertram's hand coronets had ſued in vain; various were the ſolicitations ſhe had withſtood, and it was now imagined the ambitious beauty had ſet her heart upon being a Dutcheſs, as all inferior titles had been rejected by her.

Sir Robert had allowed his daughter to make her own election, ſtill ſecretly hoping Lord Morville would at laſt be the huſband of her choice; for, as the good Baronet looked round on the gay world of admirers that fluttered round his daughter, he ſuppoſed the well-known fortune, which would be her's, poſſeſſed more charms than her face, beautiful as it was, with many of them, whilſt he believed, that from Lord Morville this was not to be dreaded. His natural generoſity gave little room for ſuſpecting that intereſted views would govern his choice, and if he again offered himſelf to her acceptance, it would be uninfluenced by any ſuch conſideration; for the Baronet had marked in the ſon of his early friend an intrinſic goodneſs of heart, and he hoped an union with Miſs Bertram, would render Lord Morville all that could be wiſhed.

CHAPTER XIV.

MY readers will not wonder that Miſs Bertram had received ſuch proofs of the power of her charms; ſixty thouſand pounds it was publicly known would be her's at Lady Bertram's deceaſe; and there was only Mr. Bertram between her and the ſucceſſion to the united eſtates of Malieveren and Bertram;—the ancient Barony of the former was expected ſhortly to be granted to her Ladyſhip or her ſon, and failing him, to deſcend to her daughter. Very differently was our heroine ſituated; ſhe was, it was known, a dependant upon

upon the generoſity of Lady Bertram; ſhe was deſtitute of any relative connexion, and her birth ſo obſcure, that no one could ſay who were her parents, or what was their ſtation in life. What chance then had her perſonal charms, even if ſuperior, of rivalling thoſe of Miſs Bertram? what chance was there of Alicia's various powers of mind, or her graceful, pleaſing, and unaffected manners conteſting the victories of her friend, whoſe thouſands gave freſh graces to her perſon and accompliſhments.

I do not ſay Alicia paſſed unnoticed, or that ſhe was not admired by the men;—this was by no means the caſe; it would be an inſult to the faſhionable circles in which ſhe moved to ſuppoſe ſo; but, though many a Right Honourable would have gladly made her a part of their eſtabliſhment, and, for a ſeaſon, have laviſhed on her all the fondneſs, all the love they were capable of feeling, and ſuffered her expences to know no bounds, as

ſhe preſided the favoured miſtreſs of the day; yet, to marry a girl nobody knew, though beautiful—to give their name to a portionleſs dependant, was what no one, except Mr. Carliel, had ever thought of; and this refuſal of Alicia's was blamed, was wondered at;—ſhe could never (ſaid the women) expect ſuch another offer;—it was (ſaid the men) right of Carliel—he is very rich, and wiſhed to ſettle in life ſoberly; Miſs Sleigh is very amiable, was ſhe not ſo proud, but no peereſs in her own right can, at times, aſſume more haughty dignity than ſhe does.

From this accuſation I cannot defend my heroine, otherwiſe than by ſaying, it was but at times ſhe aſſumed that proud and haughty manner, and that ſhe had been forced to it by thoſe around her knowing her dependant ſtate. She was approached by the gay and diſſipated men of faſhion, with an affrontery and confidence her purity of mind revolted at; they talked of her charms, of her powers of faſcination, and would,

would, had ſhe choſe to liſten, have depreciated every other woman, Miſs Bertram not excepted.

Alicia's vanity was not flattered by ſuch kind of adulation; ſhe felt rather humbled by it, and determined, by throwing a proper portion of *hauteur* into her manner, to ſet at defiance the train of triflers that appeared willing, upon her firſt introduction into the gay world, to flutter round her. The native dignity of her character, the elevation of her mind, her own conſciouſneſs of ſuperiority, with the quickneſs of her ideas, ſoon enabled her to do this. It was found ſhe had no wiſh to become the means of idling away the vacant hour; ſome left her, mortified at the manner in which ſhe had received attentions which other ladies had taken incredible pains to be honoured with; ſome indeed were leſs irritable, and thought not for a moment after they had received the rebuff, except Miſs Sleigh was mentioned, and then they would ſwear at her pride.

Who then, it may be aſked, was this Mr. Carliel, who ſo generouſly ſtepped forward, and, regardleſs of fortune, found Alicia's charms a balance againſt want of wealth?—It was not alone, I anſwer, the perſonal charms of Alicia that made him prefer her; Mr. Carliel looked forward to years of domeſtic comfort ſpent in her ſociety; it was her amiable diſpoſition which had rivetted his chains.

Mr. Carliel had gone highly patronized to Bengal, at a very early period of life, from whence, though not four-and-thirty, he had lately returned with an ample fortune, acquired honourably. His acquaintance had, when he came home, been moſt aſſiduouſly cultivated by the ennobled family from which he was deſcended; but he had evaded the hints, and refuſed the offers of alliance with the daughter of the nobleman, the head of the family. But upon ſeeing Alicia, her perſon and faſcinating manners ſo forcibly ſtruck him, and upon hearing the high encomiums paſſed by the Earl of Knaſborough

and

and all her friends, induced him to make the propoſals before mentioned.

Lord Morville was always a zealous advocate for Alicia whenever ſhe was mentioned; and the unremitted attention paid her by the Earl of Knaſborough, made ſome people aſſert, it was in hopes of having a coronet that ſhe had refuſed Mr. Carliel.

Thus ſtood affairs, in the eye of the public, the day our heroine had her morning interview with Mr. Bertram; the evening of the ſame day ſhe ſaw Mr. Meynel, who ſpoke to her of Mrs. Dalrymple; and whilſt Alicia was weeping over her misfortunes, and the fate of her revered and ever-lamented Mr. Kirby, her friends of the Bertram family were mingling with the ſplendid crowd of ſix hundred people of rank and faſhion, which filled the elegant ſuite of rooms thrown open for their amuſement that night at the Duke of Wakefield's; yet amongſt the bevy of beauties who were aſſembled on this occaſion, none was

more, and few ſo much admired as Miſs Bertram, who was particularly noticed by the Dutcheſs, and by her introduced to his Grace, to whom ſhe was unknown.

The Duke and Sir Robert were nearly cotemporaries in point of age, and when both were young men, had been in habits of intimacy; this circumſtance his Grace mentioned, and alſo intimated a wiſh to the Baronet, who happened to enter at the time, that he hoped the intimacy might be renewed.

The Marquis of Felton, the only ſon of the Duke, attached himſelf during the whole of the evening to Miſs Bertram, in a way that excited obſervation.

Elated by a conqueſt ſo diſtinguiſhed, Miſs Bertram was mortified on her return home by finding Alicia in bed, and by the poſitive commands of her Ladyſhip forbidden to viſit her, though ſhe wiſhed ſo much to communicate what had paſſed at the Dutcheſs's route.

In the morning Lady Bertram ſaw, in ſpite of Alicia's aſſumed cheerfulneſs, ſhe was ſtill indiſpoſed, and reſolved to ſpend the day at home with her, unengaged by any company, but their own fire-ſide circle, to which was added Mr. Meynel. Miſs Bertram deſerted the ſocial party, being engaged that evening to a ball given by Lady Worlaby, ſiſter to the Dutcheſs of Wakefield, under whoſe protection ſhe was to go, and had promiſed to dance the firſt dance with the Marquis of Felton.

The evening was ſpent at Sir Robert's in converſation. Alicia found her mind ſufficiently exerciſed in ſupporting her ſpirits in their uſual way; prudence demanded ſhe ſhould conceal the cauſe of their depreſſion, and gratitude to thoſe eſteemed and beloved friends by whom ſhe was ſurrounded, required ſhe ſhould not communicate any portion of her own uneaſineſs to them.

Mr.

Mr. Meynel enquired of Sir Robert, if any thing had lately occurred concerning the claim made by William March.

" I ſuppoſe (replied the Baronet) it is dropped on their ſide ; nor have I any inclination, by following the advice of the lawyers I employed, to again involve myſelf, as they wiſh I ſhould, by commencing an action againſt Ayſcough for defamation, and againſt the unfortunate William, for expences I have been at on account of him. As for Ayſcough, I have, although I may be wrong in my conjectures, accuſtomed myſelf to look upon but as an inſtrument in the hands of a more complete villain than himſelf. And heaven forbid I ſhould take any ſtep that might be a means of preventing the return of William March to virtue! to reclaim him from vice I would freely diſburſe twice the ſum he has already coſt me."

" Ere now (ſaid Henry) I ſhould ſuppoſe William ſenſible of his errors ; ere now muſt the deluſion be at an end ; for ſure the paſſion

ſion he felt for Mademoiſelle Durand could be but a tranſitory one, founded as it was in oppoſition to thoſe principles of virtue and morality he was taught, and that once he revered. Thus, whilſt a virtuous paſſion ennobles and animates to actions of heroiſm, ſuch a love as my unhappy friend was the victim to, debaſes the ſoul to guilt: under the influence of that paſſion has William ruſhed to deſtruction. Alas! I feel for, and pity him."

"I think (ſaid Lady Bertram), Mr. Meynel knew not of the laſt letter, Sir Robert, you received from Monſieur Durand, the ſecond ſon of the Count de Mavigny."

"True, I have forgot to mention it to Mr. Meynel; he ſays, that his ſiſter had been ſeen at Lauſanne laſt November, where ſhe was known by ſeveral people; that, upon this intelligence, the Count, her father, ſet out, but found upon his reaching Switzerland, his daughter and her lover had quitted Lauſanne in December."

"The

"The reſources (ſaid Alicia) muſt be very large, that could enable Ayſcough to carry on for ſuch a time ſo expenſive a law-ſuit; and alſo ſupport his pretended nephew, and conceal the fair nun from her friends."

"In vain have I ſtrove (ſaid the Baronet) to diſcover whence thoſe reſources proceeded. I have already informed you, Alicia, that I looked upon Ayſcough but as an inſtrument in the hands of a more complete villain than himſelf; yet both have been watched, nor has it been in my power to diſcover any correſpondence ſubſiſting between them, or connection of any kind;—therefore my ſuppoſitions are merely founded upon this idea: that I could not believe ſuch atrocious actions could ſpring from any breaſt but one; that no mortal heart, but one, could be ſo truly diabolical; but I waver in my opinion, and think at times I have formed too favourable an idea of human nature; and that within my own knowledge there exiſt two villains, who ought rather to be ranked with the inhabitants of the infernal regions than thoſe of earth."

The

The converſation was ſoon changed to more pleaſing ſubjects; this was one that always agitated the good Baronet in a way which never appeared on any other occaſion.

Mr. Meynell taking his leave, the family retired at an earlier hour than they had done for many weeks.

The next day, Alicia received from Miſs Bertram a ſhort detail of the ball at Lady Worlaby's; from this, however, ſhe learned that the Marquis of Felton, if not a declared lover, was a profeſſed and favoured admirer of her friend's.

Again the days and weeks ran round in one continued courſe of gaiety; the Marquis of Felton had become Miſs Bertram's conſtant attendant in public, whilſt awed by his ſuperior endowments and high rank, as well as mortified by the viſible preference Miſs Bertram

Bertram gave him, all other admirers kept aloof.

Lord Morville had hitherto beheld, with real or affected indifference, the lively Mary flirt with, or reject the numberleſs admirers that ſued for her hand, whilſt he ſaw their attentions reached not the heart they aſpired to attain; from this ſtate of apathy he felt himſelf rouſed as he beheld Miſs Bertram liſtening, with apparent pleaſure, to a lover whoſe amiable qualities adorned the high rank he held.

At Malieveren, previous to the declaration ſo ſtrangely made by Lord Morville, Miſs Bertram had given many proofs of attachment to him; but ſince then ſhe had treated him as ſhe would a perſon totally indifferent to her heart, though ſtill the intimacy ſubſiſted between the families; and Lord Morville was no otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed by Miſs Bertram, than that ſhe uſed no more ceremony in her manner to him than ſhe did to

to her brother, and no longer appeared to have any trace of that paſſion, which at Malieveren was the ſpring of her actions.

Lord Morville ſighed not after the poſſeſſion of Miſs Bertram's heart, whilſt he ſaw her careleſs and diſengaged; but vanity and ambition were both powerfully rouſed as he ſaw the Marquis of Felton ready to carry off the prize ſo many had vainly contended for, and which ſelf-love had whiſpered was yet his own. The dormant paſſion he had felt for the lovely Mary, was awakened; he was reſtleſs and unhappy, yet unwilling to appear ſo, or to add to her triumph by declaring to her what he ſuſtained; and he watched with jealous eye the happier Marquis, who ſeemed to live but upon her ſmiles.

The Marquis of Felton was rather grave than gay in his temper, poſſeſſed a ſtrong and well-cultivated underſtanding, and well-regulated paſſions; for his diſpoſition, generous, affable,

affable, and humane, was alſo naturally haſty; but this was ſubdued by the efforts he had made.—The Duke of Wakefield, whoſe only child he was, had for ſome years vainly urged him to marry, which he had, though alledging to his friends no particular reaſon, always refuſed; and had withſtood the artillery of many a pair of bright eyes directed againſt his heart; yet the Marquis was no profeſſed libertine, kept no miſtreſs, and ſeemed by the attentions he paid the ſex, to rather court than ſhun their company. But this was merely a general politeneſs, and no one lady could boaſt of a preference in her favour.

The Duke was almoſt in deſpair, for on the Marquis reſted the ancient honours of the houſe; to him did his Grace look for their ſupport. Since Chriſtmas ſo anxious was he for the marriage of his ſon, that he declared his conſent ſhould be no impediment, provided the lady he choſe was not meanly born; fortune ſhould be no object; nor would a title be a ſtipulated condition, as it had been; yet

ſtill

ſtill from a titled anceſtry muſt the woman draw her origin who dared to aſpire to an alliance with the heir of the Duke of Wakefield.

The notice the Marquis took of Miſs Bertram, the night of her Grace's route, filled the Duke with hope. He learned who the lady was, heard ſhe was the daughter of a man he had once honoured with his friendſhip; that ſhe was deſcended from a wealthy and ancient family by her father, and by her mother from the Barons of Malieveren, into which houſe that of Wakefield had twice married; and he felt overjoyed that no very material degradation could take place by an alliance with a young woman ſo deſcended, although ſhe had not Lady tacked to her chriſtian name. This it was which prompted his Grace to condeſcend ſoliciting a renewal of an intimacy with a plain Baronet; when years had elapſed, and many opportunities had ere then occurred for the ſame offer to have been made.

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This intimacy had been renewed; his Grace's new ſprung hopes almoſt realized; for the match between hi ſon and Miſs Bertram was nearly concluded, although only a few weeks had elapſed ſince they were firſt introduced to each other. Settlements were ſoon talked of by the Duke, and no impediments were thought of by him; the purpoſed jointure was larger than had ever been made on a ſimilar occaſion by the houſe of Wakefield; and the thirty thouſand pounds to be given by the Baronet was ſettled, together with the reverſion upon the Malieveren eſtate, to be ſolely at the diſpoſal of the future Marchioneſs.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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